

## DEVAPUR PROJECT AREA



After post-graduation in Applied Social Science in 1955 from Tata Institute of Social Science, Suresh Suratwala at the age of 25 years, inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's call to go to villages, shifted his social base from Mumbai to the remote, draught-prone and impoverished nine villages in Maan Taluka, Satara District, Maharashtra. He stayed and worked there for the next 35 years to conceive, plan and implement the DEVAPUR PROJECT, a pioneering and deeply engaging experiment in community development. Following Project's completion in 1990, he wrote this book to document and analyse his grass-roots experience, drawing self-critical and insightful enduring lessons, with telling implications for the contemporary exploitative and dehumanizing development model.

"This then sums up the paradox. In an unequal society like ours, 'development' would only increase and deepen inequality, leading to further concentration of wealth and the means of production, accelerating exploitation and impoverishment. Clearly, inequality is India's basic socio-economic problem, not poverty."

- Chapter 10, p. 157

"... the prevailing rural crisis - a direct consequence of the increasing disparity between the cities and villages due to the pricing policies deliberately favouring the urban-based industry, trade and the service sector while blatantly discriminating against the rural-based agricultural and artisanal production as well as other multiple productive activities undertaken by the landless labour."

- Chapter 8, p. 144

"After obtaining higher education in social science and applying the knowledge by working sincerely with the people, have I done well of the people or have I led them to more misery and suffering? Why does poverty bring out good qualities of a human being and why do they disappear when she/he is better off, when the material conditions improve? Why does such a paradoxical transformation take place?"

- Ch. 10, p. 160

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THE PARADOX OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA - THE DEVAPUR EXPERIENCE  
SURESH SURATWALA

# THE PARADOX OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

## THE DEVAPUR EXPERIENCE

• Suresh Suratwala

MHASWAD

DHOKMOD

HINGNI

RAJEWADI TANK

TO PANDHAR DUS

PULKOTI

DEVAPUR

SHIRTAY

CHUMKADWALA

PALSARDE

With Introduction by  
Dr. Anil Sadgopal

Edited by  
Rajendra Hardenia

Published by KISHORE BHARATI

*THE PARADOX OF  
RURAL DEVELOPMENT  
IN INDIA*  
– *THE DEVAPUR EXPERIENCE*

**SURESH SURATWALA**



*With Introduction by*  
**DR. ANIL SADGOPAL**

*Edited by*  
**RAJENDRA HARDENIA**

# **The Paradox of Rural Development in India**

by Suresh Suratwala

With Introduction by Dr. Anil Sadgopal

Edited by Rajendra Hardenia

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# DEDICATION

*Dedicated to  
the beloved people of nine villages  
Devapur, Gangoti, Hingni, Jambhulni,  
Palasvade, Panwan, Pulkoti,  
Shirtav & Valai  
of Taluka Maan, Distt. Satara, Maharashtra  
who accepted me and our team's work  
for 35 years.*



*I un-learned & re-learned social science  
from them  
while initiating, implementing & completing  
The 'DEVAPUR PROJECT'  
- A Rural Development Programme.*

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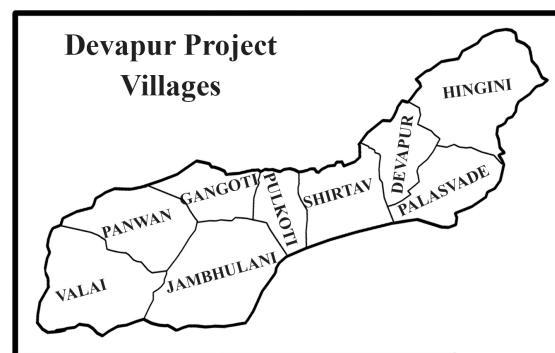
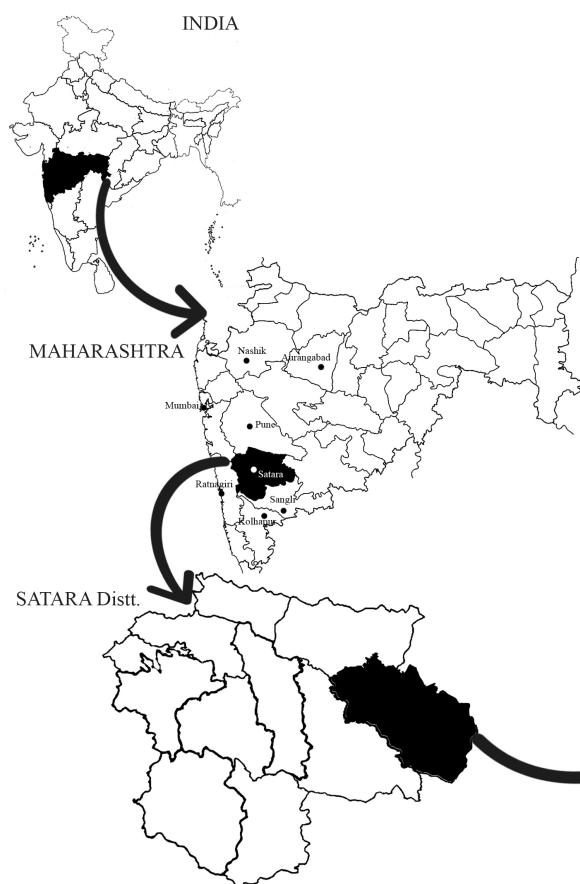
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## ABBREVIATIONS

BAIF	Bharatiya Agro Industries Foundation
BDO	Block Development Officer
CARE	Co-operative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (An International NGO for Relief)
CBC	Cattle Breeding Centre
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
Co-op	Co-operative
CRS	Catholic Relief Service
EGS	Employment Guarantee Scheme
FPAI	Family Planning Association of India
HSRA	Hindustan Socialist Republican Association
Lift Irrg.	Lift Irrigation
MSEB	Maharashtra State Electricity Board
NCPA	National Centre for Performing Arts
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OBC	Other Backward Classes
PL480	Public Law 480 (Law signed by US President 1954, also known as Food for Peace Act)
RWB	Rural Welfare Board
SC/ST	Scheduled Caste/ Scheduled Tribe
SDTT	Sir Dorabji Tata Trust
ST	State Transport
TIFR	Tata Institute of Fundamental Research
TISS	Tata Institute of Social Sciences
VO	Voluntary Organization





Source:  
 India - [https://d-maps.com/carte.php?num\\_car=24865&lang=en](https://d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=24865&lang=en)  
 Maharashtra - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satara\\_district#/media/File:MaharashtraSatara.png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satara_district#/media/File:MaharashtraSatara.png)  
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 Maan Taluka and Devapur Project Villages - Author of the Book.

Maps not to scale,  
 only indicative.



## PREFACE

"India lives in its villages. More than 70% of our rural people live on agriculture and village industries. A majority of them are illiterate and live a miserable life in poverty." This is precisely what we were taught in our colleges. During the independence movement, Gandhiji called upon India's educated youth to go to the villages and work with the impoverished with a view to improve the quality of their life. This was the inspiring ambience of the Gandhian era both before and after independence. I was one of those who were influenced by this compelling spirit in the early 1950s.

Hence, after my graduation in Economics, I underwent a two-year post-graduation course in Applied Social Sciences, with specialization in Rural Community Organization at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS, Mumbai. My teachers at TISS wanted me to do my Doctorate but I was interested instead in directly experiencing the rural life and engaging with rural development work. Accordingly, immediately on completion of my studies in 1955, I joined Sir Dorabji Tata Trust (SDTT), Mumbai which had undertaken a rural development project, almost at the same time in Maharashtra.

Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, established in 1932, is a renowned philanthropic organization in India. It provides financial support to Voluntary Organizations in the form of grants for development and welfare programmes. It also offers financial assistance to the needy and deserving individuals for higher education and medical relief. In addition, the Trust has been extending financial help towards the relief and rehabilitation of the victims of the natural calamities from time to time. Apart from this, the Trust has played a pioneering role

in initiating and/or establishing several nationally and internationally reputed institutions in the country viz., Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and National Institute of Advance Studies (NIAS) in Bengaluru; Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) and TISS in Mumbai; National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA), Mumbai; Tata Memorial Centre, Mumbai for cancer treatment and research; and others.

Until early 1950s, the focus of the Trust was on programmes and institutions in the urban areas. It was in 1952-53 that the Trust initiated for the first time a rural development project, at the instance of the Late Dr. John Mathai, the then Chairperson of the Trust. I had the opportunity to work with this experimental project as its Coordinator in a group of nine remote villages in the drought-prone Maan Taluka of Satara District in Maharashtra for a period of 35 years (1955 to 1990), until the project was terminated. I left Mumbai in 1955 and lived in a small village called Devapur, one of the nine villages of the project area. Rural work in villages is a complex and difficult field, with immense opportunities and formidable challenges.

This small book gives an account of the rural development project (known as the Devapur Project) of the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, its achievements and failures, the rich experience gained by the workers and the invaluable lessons learnt from the experiment. The book is in two parts. The first part (Chapters 1 to 5) is a descriptive narration of various rural development programmes and welfare activities undertaken by the Trust in the selected villages. It is grounded in the Bench-mark Survey of the selected villages carried out by the Gokhale Institute of Politics & Economics, Pune at the instance of its then Director Dr. D. R. Gadgil and under the guidance of Dr. V. M. Dandekar, when the Trust started its work in the early 1950s. Similarly, the other primary source is the Evaluation Study of the socio-economic conditions of the people of these villages, when the project was terminated. This Study was conducted by Sh. Y.S. Pandit, the then Economic Adviser, Tata

Industries Ltd., Mumbai. Thus, the first part of the book is based on an objective study of the Project at its beginning and at its end.

The second part of the book (Chapters 6 to 10) attempts to present my own views on rural development and its paradox. It is based on my humble experience of 35 years in the field; and 7 years as a Program Officer in the Trust Office, when I got an opportunity to interact with a large number of NGOs engaged in rural work. It is an analytical reflection in retrospect of my experiences in rural development. It is, therefore, subjective in nature but a free, frank and honest submission of my views and insights for which I am entirely and solely responsible. Hopefully, the discerning readers would find it challenging. The readers may or may not agree with my views. Hence, their comments and suggestions would be crucial in enriching the perspective and advancing the analytical discourse on rural development.

The original manuscript of the book was written by me in the year 2006. Therefore, some of the statistical data might appear to be a bit out of date. However, the substance and the main theme of the subject of the book continue to be contemporary and alive. I had passed on the manuscript to Dr. Anil Sadgopal at Bhopal for his perusal, who in turn passed it on to Sh. Rajendra Hardenia at Pipariya (Distt. Hoshangabad, Madhya Pradesh). Sh. Hardenia has taken great pains and put in sustained hard work to take care of the errors, minimise repetitions and essentially reorganise the whole manuscript in order to make it readable. I am, therefore, highly grateful to him for his precious editorial work, apart from also including an invaluable detailed Index. I express my warm thanks to Dr. Anil Sadgopal for his penetrating questions from time to time and writing a comprehensive Introduction to the book while also incorporating several of my suggestions therein. He has further helped me to update and re-envision the Epilogue in light of the present dominant political economy. My special kudos go to Ms. Shashi Mourya at Bhopal for transposing the manuscript in a book format and fine tuning its layout.

It is only due to the Late Dr. John Mathai, Prof. R. Choksi, Dr. D. R. Gadgil, Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil and Sh. J. R. D.Tata - all of them indomitable leaders of their times in varying fields - that the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust (SDTT) agreed to take up the Devapur Project. I am grateful to the Trust for giving me a unique opportunity to work in the villages of the Devapur Project and *according me complete freedom to take all major decisions, including the designing of the field-level programmes, without any interference whatsoever. This enabled me to unlearn, re-learn and review my knowledge of social science, reorganise my thoughts and re-interpret my grass-roots experiences of rural development in a critical perspective of national policy.*

Last but not the least, I record here my life-long debt to all the people of the nine villages of the Devapur Project, not only for their sustained co-operation and love but also for their immense patience in letting me learn from my mistakes at my own pace, during my stay amidst them of 35 years. Working with them in both good and difficult times has left an indelible imprint on my life. This is precisely the source of my strength in this book that emboldens me to disagree with the ruling classes and castes, postulate radical hypotheses and appeal to the new generation to demolish the failed but still dominant theories of development. Hopefully, it would be the engaged feedback from today's youth that would enable all of us to meaningfully explore the transformative path for reconstructing India as per the aspirations of the struggling masses.

- Suresh Suratwala

## INTRODUCTION

- Dr. ANIL SADGOPAL

After about 150 years of struggle against British imperialism, the vast sprawling Indian sub-continent gained independence in August 1947. In spite of the shock of the partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan and the unprecedented human tragedy that followed, a new ray of hope emerged among the youth to re-build India in the mould of the aspirations of the freedom struggle. At the age of 7 years, I was, too, proactively part of this inspiring, patriotic and nation-building mood, though I realise now, only naively. Undoubtedly, there were a range of unresolved vexed issues. Chiefly, these related to the development model and socio-economic policies to be pursued in order to eliminate inequality and the consequent poverty, unemployment, child labour and malnutrition; ensure redistribution of land and wealth; and liberate the society from exploitation and oppression historically rooted in class, caste, creed, race, patriarchy, language, birth place and disability. The national movement had also raised high public expectations of achieving universal state-funded free and equitable education and medical support with social justice; re-establishing the role of Indian languages in all spheres of national life; and spreading scientific temper and enlightenment. In addition, the freedom struggle held out the promise of critical engagement with cultural obscurantism manifested in feudalism, caste system, patriarchy, superstition, archaic anti-social practices (e.g. *sati pratha*, child marriages, dowry and oppressive regime for women, SCs, STs, OBCs, religious and linguistic minorities, denotified and nomadic tribes and the disabled) and the emergent religious fundamentalism combined with parochial pseudo-nationalism.

Apart from these socio-cultural and economic concerns, there was a re-assertion, rational or otherwise, of giving the ancient Indian culture and India's contributions made to global knowledge its due place in history, the varying and even contradicting perceptions of the diverse sub-continental cultural history notwithstanding<sup>1</sup>. A major debate was engaging the patriotic, progressive and the intellectual mind of the newly born nation on such and several other complex issues impacting on the Indian society and birth of the new nation.

### **The Battle of Ideas and Ideologies during the Freedom Struggle**

On the one hand, there was the Nehruvian vision<sup>2</sup> of rapid industrial development through heavy and, if required, imported machinery, moving towards self-reliance and building a society grounded in modern science and technology. Expectedly, this vision was endorsed, and also promoted, by the Indian capitalist class which came to be known during the freedom struggle as the 'national bourgeoisie'. We will revert to this matter later when we dwell upon the Bombay Plan (1945). This post-independence dream was symbolized by giant steel plants and big dams, all in the Public Sector, which were soon to be viewed in the school textbooks as the

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<sup>1</sup>The 'divide and rule' policy of the British Raj cynically utilised these 'varying and even contradicting perceptions of the diverse sub-continental cultural history' to promote the 'two-nation theory' to which the retrogressive forces of both the *Hindu Rashtra* and *Muslim Kaum* fell easy prey to, leading to India's partition. The suicidal rise of cultural fascism and jingoistic 'nationalism' in the contemporary Indian politics has its roots in the pre-partition 'two-nation theory'. The neo-liberal capitalism and, therefore, its logical next stage i.e. imperialism has found it convenient to 'ride piggy-back on the agency of *Hindu Rashtra* forces', with dangerous implications for India's socio-economic policies and development model, let alone the survival of the very 'Idea of India'.

<sup>2</sup>To be sure, though named after the first Prime Minister of India, the economic development vision was fully endorsed by the top leadership of the Indian National Congress (also the then entire first Cabinet) which included the stalwarts of the Freedom Struggle like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, C. Rajagopalachari and Govind Vallabh Pant, to name a few. This consensus was arrived way back at the Haripura Congress (1938) held in Bardoli, Sardar Patel's *karmabhoomi* in South Gujarat.



‘modern temples of India’, the internal developmental contradictions notwithstanding.

Juxtaposed to this imagery of modern India was the passionate appeal of Gandhi calling for rejuvenation of rural India as the primary political and socio-economic task to be undertaken after the end of the colonial rule. Earlier in 1909 in his *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi had unleashed a civilisational debate, rejecting the western capitalist development model as being exploitative, oppressive and unsustainable, especially in its relationship with nature and natural resources. He further argued that India lived in her 5 lakh villages while the cities had a parasitic relationship with the primarily agricultural village economy<sup>3</sup>. The Nehruvian logic held that the wealth generated through industrialization would eventually ‘trickle down’ or ‘percolate’ to the poor masses of rural India and bring about the long-awaited social transformation. Gandhi instead advocated that priority must be accorded to energize agro-based cottage industries for building a decentralized, self-reliant and vibrant rural economy. Simultaneously, Gandhi proposed to catalyse a ‘silent social revolution’ through *Nai Taleem* – a radical programme involving demolition of the Macaulayan-cum-Brahmanical education system and concomitant *pedagogic reconstruction of education in the mother tongue through scientific productive work undertaken traditionally by the SCs, STs, OBCs, Muslims and the denotified and nomadic tribes (these constitute today's Bahujans - 85% of India's population) to be placed at the core of education in all the classrooms of post-independence India*. Only then, he contended, poverty, inequalities (based on class,

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<sup>3</sup>The Gandhian concern regarding the parasitic relationship of the cities with the primarily agriculture-based village economy is endorsed by the author's analysis of the flawed pricing policy of agricultural and other rural products. He attributes the deepening rural crisis to "the increasing disparity between the cities and villages due to the pricing policies deliberately favouring the urban-based industry, trade and the service sector while blatantly discriminating against the rural-based agricultural and artisanal production as well as other multiple productive activities undertaken by the landless labour (see Chapter 8, p.144)."

caste, creed, race, patriarchy, language and disability), unemployment and cultural obscurantism afflicting India could be abolished.

To be sure, there were other worldviews as well. These either questioned the very premises of both the otherwise contradictory visions – Nehruvian and Gandhian – or, at least, called for major modifications therein. A powerful debate was unfolding within the Congress Party during 1930s on the ways and means of attaining freedom, under the indomitable leadership of Subhash Chandra Bose and others. Although agreeing with the Nehruvian emphasis on industrialization, Bose stood for “socialism – for full-blooded socialism<sup>4</sup>” and underlined that “This freedom implies not only emancipation from political bondage but also equal distribution of wealth, abolition of caste barriers and social inequalities . . . . Free India will not be a land of capitalists, landlords and castes . . . .<sup>5</sup>” Bose apparently appreciated certain elements of the Marxist theory but would not go along with the Soviet model of communism. Rather, he contended that “India should, therefore, evolve her own form of socialism. When the whole world is engaged in socialistic experiments, why should we not do the same? It may be that the form of socialism which India will evolve will have something new and original about it which will be of benefit to the whole world<sup>6</sup>.” The socialist wing of the Congress party, led by stalwarts like Rammanohar Lohia and Jaiprakash Narayan, underlining a relationship between class and caste in the Indian context, argued that the structure and processes inbuilt in the socio-economic policies must be designed such as to lead to redistribution of wealth (including land) without which the problems of poverty, unemployment, casteist structure, communalism and cultural obscurantism shall persist for ever.

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<sup>4</sup>Presidential Address at the All India Trade Union Congress, Kolkata, July 4, 1931.

<sup>5</sup>Presidential Address at the Students Conference, Lahore, October 1929.

<sup>6</sup>Presidential Address at the All India Trade Union Congress, Kolkata, July 4, 1931.

By the time of independence, the contending worldviews within the Congress Party finally managed to converge toward a consensus, at least a working one, on certain policy imperatives concerning the post-independence economic development model. The seniormost leadership of the Congress Party, including Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and C. Rajagopalachari, were part of the consensus led by Nehru. The consensus provided for a dominant role of the Public Sector in industrialization, modernization of agriculture and undertaking land reforms and organising cooperatives. However, the Gandhian appeal for giving priority to building a decentralized self-reliant vibrant rural economy could not be apparently accommodated in this internal consensus within the Congress leadership.

### **The Anti-Caste Discourse and Socialism**

There was yet another parallel but powerful debate of historic significance emerging in the Indian polity. This debate owes its origin to Mahatma Jotirao Phule's anti-caste discourse as documented in *Gulamgiri* (Slavery, 1873) and *Shetkaryacha Asud* (Cultivator's Whipcord, 1883), both written originally in Marathi<sup>7</sup>. In these two seminal works, Phule emerges as an organic intellectual who uses historiography to reveal the history of the subaltern castes viz., *shudra-atishudras* (*atishudras* would be 'dalits' in today's parlance). He infers that knowledge of the true history of the *shudra-atishudra* castes would lead to anti-caste revolution to liberate the entire people from the shackles of *Varnashram*. Almost half a century later, taking cue from Phule's scientific history of the caste system, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar enters into a historic debate with Gandhi in the 1930s and questions the very premise of the Gandhian logic of rural rejuvenation. Citing from his in-depth studies of the history and sociology of *Varnashram*, Ambedkar argued that the *village was the fortress of*

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<sup>7</sup>Deshpande, G. P. (Ed.), *Selected Writings of Jotirao Phule*, LeftWord Books, New Delhi, 2002, pp. 23-99 & 113-189.

*caste oppression*. Any attempt to strengthen or rejuvenate village-based economy is bound to increase the stranglehold of the upper caste hegemony, thereby maintaining the same oppressive structure that had exploited *dalits*, tribals and other backward sections of society for centuries<sup>8</sup>. While unwilling to accept the Ambedkar critique of *Varnashram*, Gandhi advocated and assiduously worked for a programme for eliminating untouchability from the Indian society and transforming villages into 'Republics' founded on equality, justice and enlightenment. There is, however, emerging evidence that Gandhi's own rigidity with respect to caste and *Varnashram* and their role in Indian society underwent radical change by late 1930s, presumably under the impact of Dr. Ambedkar's scholarly and powerful critique<sup>9</sup>.

Throughout this period, from early nineteenth century onwards, movements emerged against the caste structure and hegemony of the upper classes and castes in different parts of the country. It was through "radical questioning and rational social vision of early thinkers and leaders like Kandukuri Veeresalingam (Andhra Pradesh), Narayan Guru (Kerala), Iyothee Thassar (Tamil Nadu), Gurajada Apparao (Andhra Pradesh), Singaravelar and Periyar (Tamil Nadu) that public consciousness could be mobilized to challenge social stratification, oppose irrational traditions and

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<sup>8</sup>Interestingly, almost seven decades after Ambedkar countered Gandhi's logic of rural rejuvenation by portraying villages as "the fortress of caste oppression", this author's 35 years of rural development experience endorses Ambedkar's assertion. The author concludes that, "without 'radical structural changes' . . . no amount of the so-called rural development work would help us to create 'a social order based on equality and social justice and free of discrimination' . . . Ironically . . . [it] enables the upper classes and upper castes to strengthen their capacity to further exploit . . . [emphasis mine] (See Chapter 8, p. 141)." Nonetheless, there is a ray of hope in the author's relentless pursuit of the path to social transformation. He contends in this book that the hegemony of the upper classes and castes can be challenged provided we ensure "concurrent macro-level policy support aimed at certain basic changes in the socio-economic framework and, if necessitated, through accompanying Constitutional amendments too (*ibid*, p. 141)."

<sup>9</sup>See Sadgopal, Anil, *The pedagogic Essence of Nai Taleem: Reconstructing its Role in Contemporary Curriculum* in 'The Living Gandhi: Lessons of Our Times' (Eds. Sethia, Tara and Narayan, Anjana), Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2013, pp. 170-72.

practices and advocate education as a means of modernization of society<sup>10</sup>.”

Ambedkar did not stop at merely disagreeing with the Gandhian development model but proposed an alternative economic model which is akin to State Socialism. In a memorandum submitted to the Constituent Assembly in 1946, he advocates nationalization of all key and basic industries and acquisition of all agricultural land by the State with collectivised method of farming<sup>11</sup>. He writes: “land shall be let out to villagers without distinction of caste or creed and in such manner that there will be no landlord, no tenant and no landless labourer”. The outstanding feature of the plan is to include this model of State Socialism into the Constitution itself, without leaving any possibility for the Legislature or the Executive to “suspend, amend or abrogate it”. He argues that, if this plan is not prescribed by the Constitution, the powerful capitalist class shall not allow this plan to take shape or may allow only a highly diluted form. The Constituent Assembly did not accept Ambedkar’s proposal. However, this did not prevent his following clarion call from reaching out to the subaltern classes and castes, most of whom were and continue to be poor peasants and landless labourers of rural India:

*“My final words of advice to you are **educate, agitate and organize**; have faith in yourself. With justice on our side I do not see how we can lose our battle. The battle to me is a matter of joy. The battle is in the fullest sense spiritual. There is nothing material or social in it. **For ours is a battle not for wealth or for power. It is battle for freedom. It is the battle of reclamation of human personality [Emphasis mine].**”*

- Speech delivered at the All India Depressed Classes Conference, Nagpur, July 1942.

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<sup>10</sup>All India Forum for Right to Education (AIFRTE), Chennai Declaration, 2012, [https://www.rosalux.de/fileadmin/images/Ausland/Suedasien/NI-01-Chennai-Declaration-2nd\\_Ed-Final.pdf](https://www.rosalux.de/fileadmin/images/Ausland/Suedasien/NI-01-Chennai-Declaration-2nd_Ed-Final.pdf), p. 5.

<sup>11</sup>Memorandum on the Safeguards for the Scheduled Castes submitted to the Constituent Assembly in 1946 on behalf of the *All India Scheduled Castes Federation* and published in 1947 under the title, ‘STATES AND MINORITIES: What are Their Rights and How to Secure them in the Constitution of Free India’. Source: <http://www.ambedkar.org/ambcd/10B1.%20Statesand%20Minorities%20Appendix.htm>; Accessed on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2013.

Addressing the socialists, Ambedkar asserted that they “must recognize that the problem of social reform is fundamental” and contended that the socialist will be “compelled to take account of caste after revolution if he does not take account of it before revolution (p. 16)<sup>12</sup>.” He urged them to appreciate that “caste system is not merely a division of labour. *It is also a division of labourers* . . . it is a hierarchy in which the divisions of labourers are graded one above the other (*ibid*, p. 16-17).” Hence, his warning to the socialists, “caste is the monster that crosses your path. You cannot have political reform, you cannot have economic reform, unless you kill this monster (*ibid*, p. 16).” In his *undelivered* but a historic speech prepared for the Annual Conference of the Jat-Pat Todak Mandal, Lahore (May 1936), Ambedkar dares us to face the reality,

“Yours is more difficult than the other national cause, namely Swaraj. In the fight for Swaraj you fight with whole nation on your side. In this, you have to fight against the whole nation and that too, your own . . . . More important than the question of defending Swaraj is the question of defending the Hindus under the Swaraj . . . . only when the Hindu Society becomes a casteless society that it can hope to have strength enough to defend itself. Without such internal strength, Swaraj for Hindus may turn out to be only a step towards slavery.”

- B. R. Ambedkar

*Annihilation of Caste*, May 1936, Lahore<sup>13</sup>

### **The Anti-Imperialist Discourse Vs. the National Bourgeoisie**

The entire exercise of the Congress Party in envisaging the development model of post-independence India was rejected outright way back in late 1920s itself by the formidable ideological challenge posed by Shaheed Chandrashekhar Azad, Shaheed Bhagat Singh and their youthful revolutionary colleagues of the Hindustan

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<sup>12</sup> Ambedkar, B. R. (May, 1936), *Annihilation of Caste*, [http://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/mmt/ambedkar/web/readings/aoc\\_print\\_2004.pdf](http://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/mmt/ambedkar/web/readings/aoc_print_2004.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p.40.

Socialist Republican Association (HSRA), a political party formed in 1928. This challenge continued until the martyrdom of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1931. Clearly inspired by the scientific Marxist philosophy<sup>14</sup>, HSRA gave the twin inter-linked calls for not only liberating India from British imperialism but also for radical socialist reconstruction of Indian political economy and socio-cultural structures, through class struggle<sup>15</sup>. Class struggle, to be waged primarily under the leadership of the working class in alliance with the peasantry and the youth, will be aimed at establishing the control of the working class over the means of production which were until then in the control of the Indian capitalist class and the feudal landlords. From among all his predecessors and contemporaries in the freedom movement, Shaheed Bhagat Singh undoubtedly stands out as being the most scientific and forthright in defining socialism – it must mean abolition of capitalism, transfer of means of production and domination of the working class. In 1928, Shaheed Bhagat Singh relates untouchability with the question of land alienation and rising competitive communal politics of the times and urges upon the ‘untouchables’ to mobilize and struggle for socialist revolution [see Chaman Lal, Footnote 15 (i), pp. 156-160]. While questioning the role of the Indian capitalist class in the national movement, HSRA ridiculed the Congress Party’s conception of ‘national bourgeoisie’ and termed it as being against the interest of the masses. The Congress Party was hard-pressed to deal with HSRA’s contention that freedom struggle without a programme of socialist reconstruction would amount to merely transfer of power from ‘white sahibs’ to their ‘brown’ counterparts, rather than liberation from British imperialism and colonial rule and emancipation of the exploited and oppressed masses.

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<sup>14</sup>A philosophy committed to the goal of human emancipation.

<sup>15</sup>See (i) Chaman Lal (Ed.), *Bhagatsingh Ke Sampooran Dastavej*, Adhar Prakashan, Panchakoola, Haryana, 2004, pp. 240, 274, 276-78, 280-81, 283, 285, 294 & 299 & (ii) Bipin Chandra *et al.*, *India’s Struggle for Independence 1857-1947*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 1988, pp. 247-259.

In an assessment of the HSRA's movement made in 1980s, Prof. Bipin Chandra, the renowned historian of the Freedom Struggle, observes that Shaheed Bhagat Singh and his comrades indeed "made a major advance in broadening the scope and definition of revolution . . . Its first objective was national liberation - the overthrow of imperialism. But it must go beyond and work for a new socialist social order, it must *end exploitation of man by man*.<sup>16</sup>" Thus, HSRA gave a new direction to the Freedom Struggle by ideologically linking it with the struggle for socialist transformation. However, under the impact of the 'national bourgeoisie', the HSRA movement has been presented to the country only as a 'patriotic' movement limited to the transfer of power from the British to their Indian counterparts. This is how the radical socialist philosophy of HSRA and its revolutionary programme of social transformation have been steadily erased from the public memory in the course of time. One can now understand why it has become possible to reduce these youthful revolutionaries to merely being divine figures to be worshipped blindly as heroes of the Freedom Struggle, without being even conscious of the revolutionary cause of building socialism and resisting imperialism for which they sacrificed their lives. This should also explain why the right wing *Hindu Rashtra* forces have been apparently (at least temporarily) 'successful' in co-opting Bhagat Singh and his comrades as their icons while several sections of the progressive forces of the left are seemingly 'satisfied' by merely celebrating their martyrdom as a ritual year after year. Presently, India is undergoing multi-dimensional neo-liberal assault paving the way for the global capital to take over control of our *jal-jangal-jameen-jeevika* (water-forest-land-livelihood), *jnana* (knowledge, education) and *swasthya* (health), even as the sovereignty of the Republic faces rapid attrition. The possibility of such 'recolonisation' of India is precisely what Shaheed Bhagat Singh

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<sup>16</sup>Bipin Chandra *et al.*, *India's Struggle for Independence 1857-1947*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 1988, pp. 256.



had warned the nation about in his historic message to the youth, '*Kaum Ke Naam Sandesh*', written about seven weeks before his martyrdom!

"It makes no difference to the people if Lord Reading or Irwin are replaced by Tej Bahadur or Purshottam Das or Thakur Das."

- Bhagat Singh in '*Kaum Ke Naam Sandesh*'  
2<sup>nd</sup> February 1931, Lahore Jail

"The Struggle in India would continue so long as "a handful of exploiters go on exploiting the labour of common people for their own ends. It matters little whether these exploiters are purely British capitalists, or British and Indians in alliance, or even purely Indians."

- Bhagat Singh in a Letter  
3<sup>rd</sup> March 1931, Lahore Jail

### **The Bombay Plan and the Development Model**

In 1930s, as the freedom struggle advanced forward under the leadership of the Congress Party, the Indian capitalist class discovered a common ground with the agenda of *swaraj*, *swadeshi* and end of the colonial rule. The common ground covered the interest of the capitalist class in discouraging competitive imports of the manufactured goods from abroad thereby boosting up the market for locally produced goods. They found that Gandhi's call for the boycott of foreign cloth would also help promote the market for the cloth produced in Indian mills (i.e. the *swadeshi* cloth)<sup>17</sup>. The Congress, too, found this emerging common ground of mutual

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<sup>17</sup>To be fair to the *Swadeshi* movement, however, it should be emphasised that, with support of the Indian National Congress, Gandhi built a successful nation-wide movement of mass production of hand-spun *Khadi* cloth which went against the narrow financial interests of the leading members of the national bourgeoisie owning mills that produced cloth for the Indian market. The national bourgeoisie must have been left with no option but to continue its support of the Freedom Struggle, despite the competition its mill-made cloth faced from the popular mass movement of *Khadi* production. Apparently, the Indian capitalist class was also 'maturing' and decided to wait until it got the opportunity in 1945 to present its Bombay Plan which opened doors for its tremendous sustained growth in post-independence India.

advantage and drew upon the Indian capitalists for financial support for the freedom struggle. This is what led to the emergence of the concept of 'national bourgeoisie'. In return for this support, the 'national bourgeoisie' expected the Congress Party to negotiate with the British *Raj* on the trading conditions and tax and other laws such that these would be favourable to the Indian industries, at least would not be discriminatory in comparison to British and other foreign companies.

Thus in 1945, the Birla-led FICCI (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry) and Tata-led ASSOCHAM (Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry) joined hands to present their BOMBAY PLAN (popularly known as 'Tata-Birla Plan') to the Congress Party as a policy document for post-independence economic development model. In our present context, three outstanding features of the BOMBAY PLAN need to be highlighted here. **First**, it proposed that the development after independence would necessarily require massive investment of capital to build infrastructure, transport (road, railways, sea and air), power generation and distribution, capacity to produce steel, aluminium and other metals, mining, and 'modernisation' of agriculture. For this to happen, modern technology would have to be imported on a huge scale until self-reliance is attained. **Second**, such a scale of capital investment and technology import was way beyond the capacity of the Indian capitalist class and could only be undertaken by the new Indian state through public resources. **Third**, the Indian state must develop a powerful Public Sector but this must be done in such manner so as to promote the private capital as well. These three principles of economic policy laid the foundation of the 'mixed economic policy' of the post-independence Indian state.

With the BOMBAY PLAN, the cat was out of the bag! What further evidence was required that the freedom struggle's agenda of *swaraj* and *swadeshi* was only a convenient ploy for the so-called 'national bourgeoisie'. This ploy was used as long as it was useful in making the Congress Party procure favourable economic

concessions from the British *Raj* for its own profits. However, in 1945, at the dawn of the end of the colonial rule, these ploys had become unnecessary, if not even obstacles. Hence, the ‘foresight’ of the ‘national bourgeoisie’ lay in persuading the emerging Indian state to build a vast Public Sector which will serve the purpose of the Indian capitalist class and promote a capitalist model of development, irrespective of whether it would be in the wider interest of the masses or not.

To sum up, let us go back to the HSRA’s critique of the Congress Party in the late 1920s for building a political relationship with the ‘national bourgeoisie’. The young revolutionaries, led by Shaheed Cahndrashekhhar Azad and Shaheed Bhagat Singh, had the foresight of seeing the truth, more than 15 years before the BOMBAY PLAN provided the evidence. In final analysis, the history would record that a long-term damage to the cause of India’s anti-colonial struggle was afflicted by the ‘national bourgeoisie’ by restraining the Congress Party from (a) encouraging and supporting the building up of an unambiguous socialist policy framework, despite the presence of several leading socialist thinkers within its fold; (b) aligning with those anti-imperialist organizations (e.g. HSRA and the emerging communist movement) which were committed to socialist reconstruction of modern India; and (c) linking the anti-imperialist struggle with a radical programme of socialist reconstruction of the political economy of post-independence state.

The global capitalism is continuously undergoing cycles of internal crises in the form of economic recessions. The crisis is further aggravated by global warming and climate change, increasing inequality, rising unemployment and dis-employment, apart from attrition of ethical values and social fabric accelerated by digitalisation. To be sure, there would certainly be time and space when the Indian state would be compelled by the emerging objective conditions to undertake an honest and forthright review of how the Indian freedom struggle was not allowed to become

simultaneously a struggle for the liberation of her people from both the yoke of imperialism, on the one hand, and exploitation by the ruling class in collusion with the oppressive Manuwadi caste structure with patriarchy embedded therein, cutting across religious boundaries, on the other hand.

In the process, even the Gandhian vision of building a decentralized, self-reliant and vibrant rural economy as a primary political task after independence could no more be sustained in the capitalist model of development, though it received rhetorical references in the first three or four Five-Year Plans. Rather, it was ridiculed as being outdated. *The State has been in a hurry to push its twin agenda of debunking the Gandhian model of development and, at the same time, of raising Gandhi to the level of Mahatma and installing him as 'Father of the Nation' – pushing him beyond both comprehension and rational critique – good enough only to be used politically as an icon and worshipped blindly (See Epilogue for 'An Imaginary Dialogue Between Mahatma Gandhi and India's Present Political Leadership', pp.174-176 )!*

### **The Twin Discourse Defining the Freedom Struggle**

As substantiated above, the Freedom Struggle was defined by the twin Anti-Imperialist and Anti-Caste discourse. The two discourses, by and large, moved forward in parallel paths, exploring dialogue and mutual understanding rather rarely. Yet, due to powerful under-currents and social dynamics, these discourses impacted on each other deeply, both philosophically and politically, as it happened during Gandhi-Ambedkar Debate (Poona Pact, 1932) and again when Gandhi serialised Dr. Ambedkar's historical essay titled 'Annihilation of Caste' (1936) in *Harijan* followed by an intense debate. This inter-discourse dialogue continues to date in search of a commonality of purpose in the larger interest of India's masses (primarily *Bahujans*) and their yearning for equal opportunity to education, health, food, shelter and livelihood with social justice and dignity as citizens of India.

## **The Overarching Gandhian Appeal**

In spite of a broad political consensus around the Nehruvian vision of development at the dawn of independence, the Gandhian appeal to reconstruct India's villages continued to make immense sense to a large section of the educated youth, intellectuals and planners. The first five year plan (1951-56) emphasized rural development by disaggregating rural India in terms of Community Development Blocks and giving to each Block, in principle, a certain level of autonomy to govern and pursue its own path of development. Arguably, this may be construed as an early acknowledgment of geo-cultural diversity, though, in practice, this seemingly decentralised exercise was not only regulated by centralised guidelines but also dominated by the policy vision of the emergent Indian state. This community development plan, claiming to be inspired by the Gandhian thought, was pioneered by Shri S. K. Dey, the first Union Minister of Community Development.

It was in this backdrop in 1955 that the 25-year old Suresh Suratwala (the author of this book), born in a Gujarati business-oriented family based in Mumbai, took an unusual decision inspired by patriotism, missionary zeal and love for the people. Holding a post-graduate degree in Applied Social Science from the Tata Institute of Social Science (TISS), Mumbai, Suresh decided to uproot himself from his metropolitan upper middle class social base and shift to the drought-prone, 'under-developed' and impoverished nine villages of Maan Taluka, Distt. Satara, Maharashtra for the rest of his active life - almost 35 years! As his autobiographical documentation here reveals (see Preface, to begin with), he must have been then full of youthful passion to translate the community development ideas, then being promoted by the Union Government, into practice. This passion was in spite of the tremendous odds against him which included, among others, lack of familiarity with rural life and its internecine social structure operating under the hegemony of caste and patriarchy. Nor did he have any technical expertise required for rural development – be it in the field of water

management or irrigation, farming, horticulture, animal husbandry, cattle breeding, building infrastructure, setting up co-operatives, rural marketing and governance or creating schools and health centres. Thus, Suresh must have faced rather uncertain future but what he must have been sure of was the historic opportunity waiting for him to 'redeem our pledge' to the people of India (Ref. Nehru's historic 'Tryst with Destiny' speech at the Parliament, 14th-15th August midnight, 1947).

### **Some Personal Reflections**

Before I proceed ahead, I must confess how arduous is the task for a 'student' (i.e. myself) to write the Introduction of a book written by his 'guru' (i.e. Suresh Suratwala). This is especially so when the 'guru' emboldened me way back in 1970 to give up my teaching-cum-research career in biochemistry and molecular biology at the Govt. of India's Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai at the age of 31 years and shift my social base to rural Hoshangabad District (Madhya Pradesh) for the next 22 years of my life. Further, he continuously challenged me and my colleagues in KISHORE BHARATI (KB), the Voluntary Organisation we constituted, with his discomfiting questions regarding the work we has started doing in the rural District. Often, the questioning tended to become cynical, making us all not only uncomfortable but at times furious too. However, we all knew in our hearts that his questions were geared to make us rethink our position vis-à-vis rural development and our assumptions, often unsubstantiated as they were, particularly with respect to the role of education in socio-political transformation. His questions were often aimed at persuading us to redefine several of the established notions and 'jargon' of rural development

I recall vividly my first visit in late 1969 to Sir Dorabji Tata Trust's Devapur Project in Taluka Maan, Distt. Satara, Maharashtra, initiated in 1955 and led by Suresh Suratwala. It was an unusual learning experience for me. I was overwhelmed by the quality and depth of the dialogue with the village people that Suresh was

engaged with. Although the dialogue was in fluent Marathi of the local variety (Suresh' mother tongue is Gujarati), the meaning seemed to permeate to me through its powerful collective body language and the social context. *This was my first village-level lesson in social intervention.*

In more ways than one, the nation-wide debate on the development model that I have elaborated in this Introduction earlier was organically a part of my interaction with Suresh. He knew that, inspired by the Gandhian *Nai Taleem* philosophy, I was keen on demonstrating education as a powerful means of social transformation in my proposed rural work in Madhya Pradesh. Suresh uncompromisingly disagreed with my basic assumption. Hence, he introduced me in early 1970s to his school-age friend Jyotibhai Desai, by then an indomitable Gandhian educationist from Vedchhi, Distt. Surat, Gujarat. We three met, the first time together, on the pavement of Mumbai's Colaba Causeway standing next to the Arabian Sea. Suresh and Jyotibhai had shared the excitement of the Quit India Movement (1942) in their teens in the neighbouring suburbs of Mumbai. Suresh declared to me that, by arranging this meeting, "My responsibility is now over and Jyotibhai would henceforth guide you in your Madhya Pradesh work. You both seem to share a common worldview of education's role in society." But this was not to be the case. We three were destined to meet frequently for the next 22 years in Vill. Palia Pipariya, Bankhedi Block of Hoshangabad Distt. where KISHORE BHARATI was located or later elsewhere (mostly in Mumbai) till the middle of the 2000s.

In almost every meeting<sup>18</sup>, Suresh and Jyotibhai would invariably get into an intense argument in fluent Gujarati on the

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<sup>18</sup>Both Suresh Suratwala and Jyotibhai Desai were founder members of KISHORE BHARATI's Executive Committee from 1970 onwards and well beyond till the latter part of the previous decade (2000-2010), guiding us in transforming its role from that of a voluntary organization (KB never became an NGO, See Footnote 19 below) to one of catalyzing and supporting social movements. Although not

meaning of development and social change and the chaotic direction to which India was heading for. Suresh would 'accuse' Jyotibhai's Gandhian approach for the mess India was in and, in turn, Jyotibhai would calmly assert that his Gandhian thought transcended Gandhi and was continuously evolving, engaging with the present reality and seeking new consensus. The debate would often turn to what is meant by structural change and how it is to be brought about. The Gandhian question of 'means and end' (*Saadhan aur Saadhya*) and the role of violence or the lack of it in social change was often the focus of the debate. Some of us would try to intervene in vain with our rather shaky understanding of socialism and Marxist philosophy of social transformation but would fail to cut much ice in the *shastrarth* between the two great 'Gurus', hailing from the hallowed 'Quit India' days. Of course, the two could never agree. But, in the midst of each prolonged heated debate in Gujarati, someone would bring coffee and the two would relax and smile, pat on each other's back as good old lost friends and return to Hindi for the 'menials' like us!

### **On the Role of VOs/ NGOs (see Footnote No. 19)**

Chapter 7 asserts that the Voluntary Organizations (VOs)/Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)<sup>19</sup> "can play the role of only

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formally in the Executive Committee anymore, both continue their critically constructive relationship with us.

<sup>19</sup>Since the beginning of the Devapur Project in 1955, there has been a fundamental change in the socio-political character of the Voluntary Organisations (VOs) which took birth primarily during the Freedom Struggle. These VOs, viewed below in two categories, were formed from the late 19th century onwards as part of, to begin with, the anti-caste struggle and later of the anti-imperialist struggle as well. The first category of VOs (e.g. Phule's Satyashodhak Samaj, 1873) focused on building resistance to the caste system as well as the hegemonic caste-based patriarchy and other feudal socio-cultural structures and practices. The second category of VOs (e.g. Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram or later, Sewagram Ashram) focused on the question of an alternative model of development and/or education, especially in the context of the rural economy, then under increasing attack of the imperialist policies of exploitation and impoverishment. Both categories of these VOs evolved as socio-political movements with a mission of their own, reflecting the unique perceptions of the issues and the path of social transformation that inspired their initiators. After independence, especially from late 1970s onwards and at growing pace and intensity



Functional Development, within the existing structure of the society . . . defined by the hegemony of class, caste, creed and patriarchy. They cannot transform the given socio-economic and political structure. . . .[Nor can they] change the ownership pattern of the land and other natural resources . . . Hence, *even after carrying out Functional Development work for prolonged periods, the social structure and the socio-economic and the political system remain unchanged* [emphasis mine] (Chapter 7, p. 137)." The author makes immense sense in emphasising that the "social dynamics of the rural society is continuously changing [due to] *industrialization, urbanization, materialism, consumerism, and also introduction of scientific and technological changes*"<sup>20</sup> [emphasis mine]" and,

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in the 1980s, the government intervened in VOs offering grants, forming and regulating their networks and co-opting their leadership in government committees and advisory bodies. Foreign agencies, too, from both the capitalist world and the socialist countries, pitched in with increasing financial support combined with ideological and programmatic interventions. From early 1990s, with the onset of the globalisation and imposition of neo-liberal capitalist policies on India's political economy, the character of VOs underwent significant and rapid changes. The agencies of neo-liberal capitalism such as the IMF, World Bank, WTO, DfID and a range of international financing agencies including the UN agencies, made strategic interventions in VOs. In the process, ***the VOs became NGOs*** (a term first introduced in India in the late 1970s), losing their historic legacy of both the anti-caste and anti-imperialist struggles - now without a mission of their own. The NGOisation of VOs not only isolated them from the socio-political movements but also proactively diluted and distorted them too! The NGO leadership today stands essentially co-opted by the state and the global agencies of neo-liberal capitalism and more recently by the Hindu Rashtra forces as well. ***Clearly, this book's author is not talking of NGOs but of VOs of his times i.e. 1950s, born as legacy of the Freedom Struggle. To avoid further confusion, henceforth we shall use the term VO and not NGO, unless required by the specific political context, as elaborated in this Note.***

<sup>20</sup>Since the manuscript was finalised by the author in 2006, digitalisation has steadily taken over several basic functions of human society. The author apparently had a foreboding. While, on the one hand, digitalisation has made communication, flow of information, money transaction and commodity exchange much easier and faster, but on the other hand, it has also led to several serious problems like addiction to internet and mobile technology, suicidal stranglehold of digital games, alienation within families and from the society, apart from dangerously increasing dis-employment (Artificial Intelligence and Robots are rapidly taking over the manufacturing and services sectors) and the attendant psychological and physical disorders due to lack of productive and physical work. Even the technologically

therefore, the need "to evolve new approaches" while maintaining focus on *"bringing about equitable, just and sustainable development . . . based on ethical values [emphasis mine] (ibid, p. 138)." Further, he aptly cautions us that ". . . problems are linked to the global policies of the IMF, World Bank and WTO . . . Unless the VOs . . . come together, we shall not be able to make any dent in their stranglehold over . . . countries like ours (ibid, pp. 138-139)." He calls upon the VOs "[to] undergo . . . self-introspection . . . to give a common united fight to the forces of neo-liberal capitalism . . . (ibid, p. 139)"*

The author laments that the VOs doing good work are "functioning in isolation of each other . . . each VO's organisational ego . . . prevents them from coming together." However, he also acknowledges that, "along with the organisational ego, the difference at ideological or strategic level may also come in the way of collective action (ibid, p. 139)." Here is probably an oversimplification of the vexed issue. The author's diagnosis seems to be only partially true. The inability or the unwillingness of the VOs, like that of the political parties as well, to form a common platform may also be a consequence of their *incomplete or even erroneous ideological assessment of the crisis of global capitalism.*

### **Voluntary Organisations: The Context of Political Economy**

In the case of India, the neo-liberal capitalism has managed to divert political attention from its systemic crisis by '*riding piggy-back on the Hindu Rashtra forces in order to exploit India's vast market and rich natural resources*'. This has made it possible for the neo-liberal capitalism, with support from the *Hindu Rashtra* forces, to polarise Indian polity, divide the working class and social movements along caste, religious and linguistic identities, capture

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advanced countries have started acknowledging, though grudgingly, the serious and wide-ranging socio-cultural and political implications of digitalisation in civilisational terms. Decisive preventive steps are being taken, including banning of the use of digital technologies until certain age and grade in schools and legislating its use in other spheres of life as well.

state power and, thereby control India's economy as well. Similarly, in the North America, U.K. and several other economically advanced countries, the crisis-ridden global capitalism, facing increasing unemployment (as is the case with India, too), has chosen to **“ride piggy-back on the far right wing upsurge”**. The far right forces in the USA, in turn, misled the people during the last Presidential elections by diverting attention from the systemic crisis of capitalism to the migrant low-wage workers belonging to the races other than the dominant white population. In this manner, the non-white races were made the villain, instead of neoliberal capitalism and the question of unemployment was turned into a racial question, thereby polarising the white population to result in President Trump's victory. ***This uncanny resemblance between the rise of the Hindu Rashtra forces in India and the far right upsurge in the economically advanced countries in recent years must be analysed and the ideological implications of the neo-liberal capitalist fascist policies internalised by the VOs.*** Only then the VOs would be politically mature enough to come together and fight unitedly against the neo-liberal capitalist fascist assault on India's political economy by constituting a common Non-party Political Forum, as passionately and correctly advocated by the author in Chapter 7 (p. 139).

### **Lessons from Devapur Project**

As we will see in Chapter 8 (‘Lessons to Learn’), the following conceptual lessons of socio-political significance have been drawn by the author from his experience of rural development work in the Devapur Project (summarized from the Chapter’s text; operational lessons have been excluded):

- ✓ Rural development work at micro-level cannot ever lead to the required structural transformation . . . without concurrent macro-level policy support . . . and, if necessitated, through Constitutional amendments. “Unless some radical structural changes . . . are concomitantly brought about, no amount of . . .

rural development work would . . . create a social order based on equality and social justice and free of discrimination . . . the *status-quo* continues and, at best, only an idealised model like an 'Oasis in the Desert' is created which . . . **ironically . . . enables the upper classes and upper castes to strengthen their capacity to further exploit and marginalise** [emphasis mine] (p. 141).”

- ✓ “Individual Freedom, Civil Liberty, Socio-economic Equality, Social Justice, Ethical and Moral Values . . . constitute *the vital pillars of the process of development . . . must not be either ignored or neglected* [emphasis mine] (pp. 141-142).” Yet, these very 'vital pillars' have no space in the rural development programmes or the academic courses that prepare workers for the same.
- ✓ “. . . land ownership pattern in rural society i.e. the relations between the landlords and labourers . . . issue of the incremental corporate ownership . . . over all other natural resources . . . have crucial implications . . . However, in Functional Planning . . . these crucial issues are not taken into account and rural development is carried out not only within the prevailing socio-economic framework but also to reinforce it . . . the rich become richer and the poor become poorer, thereby increasing inequality. Hence, our submission: ***poverty is not the basic problem but inequality in ownership pattern of the natural resources is the fundamental problem*** [emphasis mine] (p. 142)”
- ✓ Agricultural pricing policy is turned against the rural economy in general and the small and marginalised farmers, artisans and landless labour, in particular. The seller i.e. the farmer is in no position to decide the market price of agricultural produce. Instead, the traders and buyers decide the price. In the case of industry, trade or services, the price of the product is basically determined by the manufacturer/ trader/service provider, not the buyer. Until and unless, such basic policy issues are not settled,

***“no amount of rural development would resolve the . . . rural crisis – . . . consequence of the increasing disparity between the cities and villages due to the pricing policies deliberately favouring the urban-based industry, trade and the service sector . . . discriminating against . . . agricultural and artisanal production . . . multiple productive activities undertaken by the landless labour [emphasis mine] (p. 144)”.***

- ✓ “The real yard stick of rural development is neither the construction of various buildings, roads and utilities or increase in agricultural production and income nor providing more welfare facilities and amenities . . . *the ultimate goal of rural development must not be reduced merely to such material and economic improvements. It has to . . . include . . . the question of human and social development . . . calls for increased community consciousness and fellow feeling . . . the human values must prevail, and the finer qualities of fellow feeling must grow. . . to create a New Society with new human relationships . . . sacrifice individual good for the community well being . . . strengthening social harmony. . . [this] can happen only by annihilating the hegemony of class, caste, creed, race, patriarchy, languages, birth place and the 'normal' body* [emphasis mine].<sup>21</sup> These should be the yard sticks . . . On the contrary, even after sustained rural work . . . the community stands divided . . . there are more cases in the police stations and the courts . . . inter-family feuds for petty selfish interests have exacerbated. Is this the development that inspired us? . . . (pp.144-145).”

We need to examine each of the above lessons of the Devapur Project drawn by the author in light of the rich ideological debate that preceded the ‘transfer of power’ in 1947. If this exercise is undertaken analytically, *one would realize that the outcome of the*

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<sup>21</sup>This assertion takes cue from the central logic of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's historic essay entitled, *Annihilation of Caste*, 1936 (For this essay's weblink, see Footnote 12 in the Introduction).

*Devapur Project was a foregone conclusion. It would also become clear that the question of ideology can be avoided only at great risk to the future of our country.*

### **Dilemma, an Agonising Dilemma**

The author poses the following agonising dilemma, expressed here through selected excerpts from his last Chapter (Chapter 10), appropriately titled 'Introspection on Some Basic Questions':

"... about 50 years ago, the people of the drought-prone Maan Taluka, where Sir Dorabji Tata Trust<sup>22</sup> worked for rural development, were severely impoverished (p. 158) ... Our intentions and objectives were never limited to just bringing about material development ... our goal was also to transform the quality of life, instil human values and improve social relationships (pp. 152-153)."

"We were keen that ... the people would retain ... their finer human sensitivities and values which they had in ample measure before we started our work in 1955 ... we found the local people to be ... definitely ethically rich, having finer sensitivities for each other ... [now] they are ... having a much more comfortable life than before, enjoying good food, clothing, shelter, employment and livelihood and better educational and health facilities and other amenities, along with the modern means of transport, recreation and comforts (*See Chapters 3 & 4 for details*). However, ... in the race for material and economic development, we have lost the good old human being of the ... impoverished Devapur Project villages ...

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<sup>22</sup>For the limited purpose of this book, one is consciously not assigning any motives to the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust in undertaking the Devapur Project, assuming that it was motivated by the good old philanthropy promoted by the liberal values of capitalism - to be distinguished from the present neo-liberal project of 'Corporate Social Responsibility' (CSR). Let us, at least for the time being, accept the author's assertion that he had full freedom to decide his course of action (*See Preface, p. 4, italics*). However, even this assertion does not rule out the implicit undeclared agenda of the Trust that would be the operative agenda of the 'national bourgeoisie' but then that is yet another, though entirely inter-linked and unavoidable, debate altogether.

the people have become far more selfish, greedy and individualistic, leading to loss of fellow-feeling. . . There are more vices, increased quarrels within the family as well as the community . . . several-fold more lawyers to deal with them. The local people are invariably under some stress. . . despite the so-called better 'education'. . . *Ironically. . . prosperity led to loss of the finer human qualities, happiness and a life of satisfaction . . .* [emphasis mine] (pp. 153-154)."

*The agonised author inquires, "Why is it that the impoverished human being has finer human sensitivities and social consciousness than when she/he becomes prosperous with access to amenities and comforts? **Why do the finer qualities of a human being get eroded during her/his material and economic improvement** (p. 154)?* [emphasis mine]."

*Puzzled and distressed, the author continues, ". . . If it is so, then why do we pursue the so-called progress and development and for what purpose? Why do we try to improve the material conditions of people, if we cannot make them happy?* [emphasis mine]. . . How does one ensure that we do not become more selfish, accept vices, become jealous or get involved in conflicts . . .? Is it only because of materialism, consumerism, urbanization, modernization and industrialization? . . . We tend to argue that education could provide a solution . . . My observation . . . *the more an individual is 'educated', the more skills she/he acquires to manipulate, exploit and oppress others. A formally 'educated' person is less inclined to help others than otherwise. 'Educated' persons generally tend to be more self-centred, sectarian and manipulative than an illiterate and poor but hard-working persons. . . . Why then educate the people* (pp. 154-155)<sup>23</sup>? "

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<sup>23</sup>The author's twin agonising questions regarding the social function of education must not be glossed over. He inquires, (a) "But, does education really transform the human being into becoming a better human being?" and (b) "Why then educate the people?" Both questions have civilizational implications. The answer to these fundamental questions have been insightfully provided by Albert Einstein in his

"... a person, whether an upper caste or a SC/ST/OBC or suffering from any other deprivation, gets an opportunity by gaining a higher position in society, she/he is more than likely to use her/his knowledge and skills to exploit not only others but her/his own brethren, too [emphasis mine]. . . [Why?] These are some of my fundamental questions whose answers I am seeking (p. 155)."

". . . I would prefer to clearly differentiate between DEVELOPMENT/PROGRESS, on the one hand, and TRANSFORMATION, on the other [emphasis mine] . . . the VOs are not in a position to bring about . . . fundamental transformation . . . or even inculcate human sensitivity and fellow feeling [emphasis mine]. . . even the genuine VOs committed to bringing about fundamental transformations in society . . . end up making the required adjustments and compromises for their survival (pp. 156,157)."

"There is universal praise for all the good work I did . . . by quitting the city of Bombay at the age of 25 years and working with the people for the next 35 years . . . However, this does not satisfy me at all . . . I have introspected over the afore-mentioned issues deeply . . . but I have not been able to find any meaningful answer . . . I decided to put down my views in the form of a book, in the hope that my readers will try to help me [emphasis mine]. . . Here is the pointed question. . . : **After obtaining higher education in social science and applying the knowledge by working sincerely with the people, have I done well of the people or have I led them to more misery and suffering? Why does poverty bring out the good qualities of a human being and why do they disappear when she/he**

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classical essay, "Why Socialism?" written in May, 1949 whose three paragraphs have been excerpted and reproduced in this Introduction's last Section named, 'LOOKING AHEAD' (pp.40-41). The parts of the last two paragraphs which are relevant to exploring the answer **are shown in bold fonts**. The power of the answer lies in envisaging education not in ideological vacuum but in the perspective of building a socialist economy. Hopefully, Albert Einstein's essay would encourage the readers to read the writings of other revolutionary educationists as well. What is ailing India's education since independence can't be cured without deconstructing and reconstructing our education policies in a socialist perspective.



*is better off, when the material conditions improve? Why does such a paradoxical transformation take place? (160)"*

"The author is deeply concerned that the *"process of development . . . in an unequal society, leads to increase in inequality* [emphasis mine]<sup>24</sup>." He proposes that "one solution appears to be equitable distribution of the natural resources and means of production like land and water, as directed by the Constitution in Articles 39(b) and 39(c) respectively." "But how could it be done?," he asks in the same breadth. As if trying to answer his own question, the author raises a fundamental issue related to the nature of knowledge in social science. He writes, *"In the field of social science, two types of planning, namely Structural Planning and Functional Planning have been recognized. But what we generally do and what I did for 35 years is only Functional Planning without bringing about any change in the structure of the society* [emphasis mine]." Significantly, the author later flags the *"problem of organizing the masses in the rural areas, particularly the agricultural labourers, into an effective and sustainable mass movement for (a) short term gains and benefits and (b) long term goal of creating a new society* [emphasis mine]."

### **Engaging with the Dilemma**

Here is a story of an extra-ordinarily passionate 25-year old post-graduate in Applied Social Science in 1955 from Mumbai, in the years still inspired by the anti-colonial freedom struggle including the Gandhian call to the youth 'to go to the villages', who voluntarily uprooted himself from his metropolitan middle class background in order to 'redeem his pledge' [in Nehru's words cited from his 'Tryst with Destiny' midnight speech on the intermittent night of August 14-15, 1947] to the people of his country. He moved to drought-stricken nine villages of Maharashtra for the next

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<sup>24</sup>These are some reflections of the author after completing the manuscript in 2006, excerpted from a Background Note dated June 18, 2008 sent to me. For detailed data-based elaboration, see the author's monograph entitled, 'Real Economic Problems of India: Inequality Not Poverty, Unemployment Not Growth', 2016.

35 years and worked with unusual sincerity and commitment to bring about rural development. For him, as we now see, rural development incontrovertibly meant *development with social transformation*, in sharp contrast to those who would indulge in self-glorification by showing off the evidence of material or physical improvement. The author's self-critical mind and unshakable commitment to the goal of building an egalitarian and just social order in consonance with the Constitution will not allow him to seek such indulgence from the visible material and physical development that was brought about in abundance in the Devapur Project. Neither the Indian state would ever offer him any Padma or other such awards nor would his conscience allow him to accept such a bourgeois award even if one was offered. ***His dreams are apparently akin to the Gandhian ideals of building a vibrant self-reliant rural economy where villages will act as 'Republics' whose social relations, both within and with the world outside, and ethical values will be moulded by Nai Taleem's transformative vision of education***<sup>25</sup>. ***At the same time, his dilemma is clearly born out of his socialist yearnings rooted in the Marxist concern for creating a new human being for building a humane society. If this was not the case, there would have been no dilemma at all, agonizing or otherwise!***

Given the unstinted support from one of the most 'liberal' corporate house of India of the times viz., Sir Dorabji Tata Trust (SDTT), neither funds nor technical expertise were lacking<sup>26</sup>. Yet,

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<sup>25</sup>Those interested to delve deeper in this subject may like to look at my own work viz. *The Pedagogic Essence of Nai Taleem: Reconstructing Its Role in Contemporary Curriculum*, in 'The Living Gandhi: Lessons for Our Times', (Sethia, Tara & Narayan, Anjana Eds.), Penguin Books India, 2013, pp. 163-179). See also my seven-lecture series delivered at Gujarat Vidyapeeth, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, March 2010 : [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rq2XwDTq3Ko](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rq2XwDTq3Ko)

<sup>26</sup>At this juncture, it would be worthwhile to note that KISHORE BHARATI also received generous and 'seemingly' unconditional financial support from the same Sir Dorabji Tata Trust (SDTT) in its crucial initial years and beyond that phase as well (from 1972 to 1990). In this context, the association of the author with KISHORE BHARATI is only coincidental. However, as the work of KISHORE BHARATI

the central character and the narrator of this story, after handing over the social and economic institutions, built up assiduously during the Devapur Project, to the local people, winds up the entire project in early 1990s. By then, 60 years old, he returns to the same metropolitan Mumbai which he quit in 1955 – frustrated and despondent and deeply concerned, not about himself, but about the people and the country that beckoned him at the age of 25. ***Clearly, the romantic engagement is over but the author’s patriotic, socially committed and intellectual mind is raising discomforting questions and posing dilemmas for social scientists, planners and policy makers, the ruling class in particular.***

The lessons of the Devapur Project drawn by the author and the guidelines offered by him for Voluntary Organisations (VOs) provide further clues for addressing the questions and dilemmas raised by Devapur’s ‘paradoxical transformation’ (see previous sections). Here is an attempt, though in an exploratory mode, to respond.

To be sure, at least a part of the answer will necessarily have to be sought in the historical debates on the development model and

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was increasingly politicized during the course of the next 7-8 years, tensions grew and the negotiations for continued financial support became increasingly complex and sensitive. **My considered opinion in hindsight:** Had KISHORE BHARATI not wound up its rural campus and returned the leased land to the M.P. state government by 1992 – **just when the neo-liberal policy framework began to be instituted in India – SDTT would have been persuaded to decline the continuation of its financial support.** I have a reasonable ground for making this statement. In 1997-98, I approached SDTT on behalf of Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha (BJVJ), led by the nationally reputed educationist, Prof. Yash Pal, for support to its ‘LOKSHALA PROGRAMME’ – a nation-wide action plan of social intervention to bring about transformation in the elementary education policy framework and reverse the ongoing World Bank-dictated neo-liberal assault on the school system. After due deliberations, the support was politely but firmly declined! “Yours is not the task to bring about policy changes. That is a task for the Government. Go to a village anywhere in the country and settle down there as you did earlier in 1971-72 and full support will follow *as before, just by sending a post card.*”, is precisely what I was told, rather patronisingly, at the Bombay House, the SDTT Headquarters. Even Prof. Yash Pal’s credibility did not make an iota of difference. The reader is free to draw one’s own inference from this narrative (See Chapter 5, Footnote 39).

socio-economic policy that informed India's Freedom Struggle, summarized earlier in this Introduction. The Devapur Project was initiated in mid-1950s when the Indian state was still at least claiming to be a welfare state and pursuing its 'mixed economic policy'. The project was wound up in early 1990s when the Indian state had formally opened its doors to the policies of globalization and, giving up all pretension of a welfare state, was blatantly pursuing the neo-liberal model of development. This pursuit, since 1991, has been undertaken increasingly even at the cost of India's sovereignty and the Constitution's vision of building a democratic, socialist, secular, egalitarian, socially just and enlightened society. Both models of development – the welfarist and the neo-liberal – are basically capitalist development models and both promoted Public Private Partnership (PPP), overtly or otherwise. Yet, the differences are striking. During the 1950s, the state played a dominant role and the capitalist class was a dependent and junior partner. In contrast, from 1991 onwards, the global capital through its agency viz., the Indian capitalist class, in incremental measure, is dictating terms to the Indian state. Ironically, the global capital continues to require the Indian state for its own greed and growth as long as the state is under its control. Let us record the major changes that have taken place in this intervening period of seven decades:

- i. Indian state's co-ordinates with respect to its political economy have entirely changed, undeniably against the interest of the Indian masses, from being a welfare state (at least claiming to be and perhaps even striving to be under public pressure) to those of a neo-liberal state. *This implies a major change in the state's relationship with its people – from the people being citizens of a sovereign democratic Republic in 1950s as enshrined in the Constitution to the state acting as a market provider at the behest of the global capital and the people being treated merely as customers and consumers, rather than as citizens, incrementally from 1990s onwards to date.*

- ii. The state has begun to rapidly *abdicate its Constitutional obligations* with respect to the masses and nation's natural, intellectual and socio-cultural resources by outsourcing its responsibilities to a greedy and exploitative market, increasingly through PPP i.e. *by shifting public resources to the private capital*.
- iii. The *Constitutional concepts of equality and social justice stand replaced by the so-called 'inclusive policies'* since the 11th Five-Year Plan wherein the character of 'inclusion' – its coverage, mode and quantum – is decided at the behest of the global capital for preparing a cheap slavish global workforce, rather than for fulfilling the aspirations of the masses in consonance with the Constitution. In other words, the neo-liberal policies are designed to *first exclude a substantial proportion of the masses, primarily Bahujans<sup>27</sup>, from their Constitutional Right to equitable development and then to 'include' a miniscule proportion* of them at varying levels of exploitative wages *as enslaved global workforce*, at terms and conditions set by the market, not the Constitutional imperatives. This is precisely the design of the much-hyped Skill India Mission linked to Make in India, operating since 2014, for ensuring the supply of cheap labour to attract finance capital from elsewhere to India on the promise of optimum profit and enslaved labour.<sup>28</sup>
- iv. For the past five years, the dynamics of the neo-liberal assault on India's political economy has undergone substantial changes - both in terms of its pace and parameters. These assaults are misleadingly labelled as 'reforms', instead of 'deforms'. They represent the deepening crisis of global capitalism *compelling the Indian state to kowtow to its ever alarming demands of*

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<sup>27</sup>Bahujans, comprising SCs, STs, OBCs, Muslims and De-notified & Nomadic tribes, make up more than 85% of India's people.

<sup>28</sup>For detailed policy analysis, see Sadgopal, Anil, '*Skill India ' or Deskillng India: An Agenda for Exclusion*, Economic & Political Weekly, Mumbai, 27th August 2016, pp. 33-37.

*heightened levels of penetration by global capital i.e. using euphemisms such as 'Ease of Business' while permitting incrementally unregulated extraction and exploitation of Indian economy and resources, both human and natural. Even more dangerously, the **neo-liberal capitalism has managed to divert attention from its systemic crisis by 'riding piggy-back on the Hindu Rashtra forces in order exploit India's vast market and rich natural resources'**, as is evident from the outcome of the Loksabha Elections (May, 2019).*

Undoubtedly, the Lessons of the Devapur Project need to be viewed and deciphered in the above perspective of political economy. After all, we must understand, as the author himself emphasizes, that rural development is not undertaken in isolation of the socio-economic policies – national or international. Let us also recall that the Devapur Project was conceived when the 'mixed economic policy', rooted in the Bombay Plan of the Indian capitalist class, was being implemented. As noted earlier, in this framework, the entire Gandhian vision of rejuvenation of the rural society and its economy stood marginalized from even before India became independent. Rural development was relegated as a dependent variable in planning – dependent on the dominant policies of centralised industrialization and concomitant urbanization, to the utter neglect of the agenda of socio-economic transformation of rural India. Although the Public Sector played a dominant role in industrial development, as per Bombay Plan, this, too, was designed to promote the capitalist class i.e. centralization of capital and means of production in a few hands and continued exploitation of labour for the benefit of the capitalist class<sup>29</sup>. *Where was then any*

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<sup>29</sup>It is falsely assumed and claimed that the post-independence economic policies of 1950s were socialist. What is true is that, as per the Bombay Plan (1945), the Public Sector in various spheres of national life dominated the Five-Year Plans, possibly up to late-1980s. Thanks to the Nehruvian vision, the Public Sector clearly laid a futuristic multi-dimensional reliable foundation of national economy based upon which India could successfully withstand the cycles of crises of global capitalism in the past two decades and also ensure a strong foundation for today's new

*chance for the Devapur Project to unfold as per the social vision of the author of this book, his unquestionable commitment and missionary zeal notwithstanding?*

Similarly, the prevailing NGO sector has nothing in common anymore with either the philanthropic and charity-oriented organizations of the past or the Gandhian voluntary organizations of pre-independence or post-independence era (See Footnote 19 in Introduction for the rationale of not using the term 'Voluntary Organisations', VOs, in this context). This powerful and vast NGO sector, with honourable exceptions apart, now essentially represents the interest of the global corporate capital and is designed accordingly. The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is an evidence of collusion between the state and the corporate capital in order to promote the latter's selfish interests. It hardly matters whether the NGOs are funded directly by the World Bank or the inter-governmental agencies like DFID or UN agencies or by the Indian state and any of its myriad funding agencies, both in the public and private sectors. The agenda of the NGO sector is basically shaped by the global capital and market. Indeed, in devious ways, the NGO sector of the neo-liberal phase of capitalism has now become an instrument of not only maintaining the *status quo* but also of diffusing mass struggles aimed at structural transformation. This latter role becomes especially evident when the mass struggles begin to challenge the fundamental design of capitalism i.e. controlling and moulding global intellectual, socio-cultural and natural resources for profit, subjugation and hegemony.

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development plans, including use of space for communication and strategic digitalisation. None of these facts, however, allow us to construe that India was following a socialist path of development. On the contrary, the Indian state since independence pursued what essentially amounted to a capitalist model of development. The Public Sector came under a series of increasing assaults from 1991 onwards (including disinvestments and derailments) in order to promote private capital, with rising levels of Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs). During the last five years, the dynamics of these attacks has accelerated several-fold, resulting in diluting and distorting the Public Sector to dangerously low levels, to the detriment of both the national economy and public welfare.

Hence, contrary to what the author hopes for, there is little rational basis for expecting such agencies to come together to form a Non-party Political Platform for the purpose of advancing the social transformation agenda<sup>30</sup>. The earlier we come out of this wishful thinking, the easier it will become to strategise and carry forward mass struggles (and hopefully, people's movements, too) for socialist reconstruction of Indian polity and society.

### **Functional Planning vs. Structural Planning**

At this juncture, I must raise an epistemological issue with respect to the post-graduate course of 'Applied Social Sciences' that the author completed at the Tata Institute of Social Science (TISS) in 1955 before starting the Devapur Project. The categorisation of rural development in terms of '*functional* planning' and '*structural* planning' in the course, as reported by the author, is itself highly problematic. This is because it seems to completely by-pass the then existing knowledge of philosophy and social science relating to how human societies evolve and change, with the social structures playing a determining role. The course design refuses to learn from the historic struggles waged by Phule, Ambedkar and Periyar to demolish the Brahminical structure of caste as a pre-condition for liberation of the masses. Nor does it learn from Shaheed Bhagat Singh's challenge to imperialism in order to make India's Freedom Struggle an instrument of socialist reconstruction instead of being merely 'transfer of power' from 'white' sahibs to 'brown' sahibs. It also ignores the world history of the formidable socialist experiments in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and the rich experience of social transformation through mass movements. To say the least, the TISS course over-simplifies the question of "what is development and how to engage with it" and, in the process, reduces it to these

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<sup>30</sup>Even at the cost of repetition, it would be worthwhile to emphasise that, with rare exceptions, the Voluntary Organisations (VOs), representing the legacy of the Freedom Struggle, have steadily metamorphosed into NGOs under the impact of the neo-liberal policies since early 1990s (See Introduction, Footnote 19 for elaboration).



rather superficial, if not even misleading, categories. *It is not just that the course was only 'theoretical' and had little relevance for rural areas, as the author laments. Rather, the course is premised on a misconceived theory of development and, therefore, designed to mislead the students and, through them, to derail the rural development work they undertake.*

### **Politics of Being Apolitical & Denying Ideology**

Let me take this opportunity to underline an issue of great political significance. Irrespective of one's ideological position, the pre-independence debate reveals that those who deny interest in the question of ideology and *claim* to be interested only in 'charitable activities', 'practical or constructive work', 'helping the people' or 'social work' implicitly carry their own ideology, ether camouflaged or unarticulated as the case may be. Evidently, the proportion of such people and NGOs is rapidly increasing in the prevailing neo-liberal economic order. They are being funded by government-supported powerful and well-oiled private foundations in the name of charity or philanthropy, both from within and outside India. One can meaningfully engage with a clearly stated ideological position, whether one accepts the position or rejects it or seeks modifications therein. But it can be quite difficult to engage with what is either camouflaged or unarticulated as this would be like shooting in dark. *The claim of not having any ideology essentially amounts to a pretension of 'being depoliticized' since this in itself is an ideological and political position, full of inherently far more dangerous implications than otherwise!*

### **Light at the End of the Tunnel: Mass Movements**

The author deserves kudos for his ongoing critical reflection leading to his later realization of the significance of mass movements in achieving the goals of development. This calls for some elaboration. He has rightly distinguished, as reported earlier, between "*an effective and sustainable mass movement* for short term gains and benefits" and "*long term goal of creating a new*

*society* (Chapter 10, p.161) [emphasis mine].” This clearly implies that the author, discarding the misconceived notion of ‘*structural* planning’ and ‘*functional* planning’ imparted by TISS, is presently engaging with the vexed political question: How can the mass movements for short-term demands shift from their prevailing diversionary agenda of ‘economism’ to that of socio-political transformation? ***Let us celebrate this moment as it shows that the author, despite his agonizing dilemma and ailing body (but an agile questioning mind) at the age almost 90 years, has brilliantly managed to penetrate the epistemic curtain of the misleading knowledge doled out to him in 1950s by an higher education institution of capitalist development and also to see the SATYA (TRUTH) through the lens of his conscience, while also showing us all, light at the end of the tunnel!***

### Looking Ahead

Let me conclude by citing from Albert Einstein’s classical essay, “Why Socialism?” written in May, 1949 -

“I have now reached the point where I may indicate briefly what to me constitutes the essence of the crisis of our time. It concerns the relationship of the individual to society. . . his position in society is such that the egotistical drives of his make-up are constantly being accentuated, while his social drives, which are by nature weaker, progressively deteriorate. . .” *[It is uncanny the way this is precisely what the Devapur Project too reveals.]*

“The economic anarchy of capitalist society as it exists today is, in my opinion, the real source of the evil. . . The owner of the means of production is in a position to purchase the labor power of the worker. By using the means of production, the worker produces new goods which become the property of the capitalist. . . Private capital tends to become concentrated in few hands, partly because of competition among the capitalists . . . The result of these developments is an oligarchy of private capital the enormous power of which cannot be effectively

checked even by a democratically organized political society . . . Unlimited competition leads to a huge waste of labour, and to that crippling of the social consciousness of individuals . . . **This crippling of individuals I consider the worst evil of capitalism. Our whole educational system suffers from this evil. An exaggerated competitive attitude is inculcated into the student, who is trained to worship acquisitive success as a preparation for his future career<sup>31</sup>.**”

“I am convinced there is **only one way to eliminate these grave evils, namely through the establishment of a socialist economy, accompanied by an educational system which would be oriented toward social goals.** In such an economy, the means of production are owned by society itself and are utilized in a planned fashion . . . **The education of the individual, in addition to promoting his own innate abilities, would attempt to develop in him a sense of responsibility for his fellow men in place of the glorification of power and success in our present society.**”  
*[This also explains the paradox faced by Gandhi's Nai Taleem which aimed at social transformation but did not envisage a change in the control of the means of production from that of the tiny minority of capitalists to the whole society. This, too, was the agonising paradox experienced by the Devapur Project (See Chapter 10, p.155 wherein the author raised the question: Why then educate the people?)]*

There is a clear path for moving forward. We must learn to pursue the scientific path of structural transformation from the capitalist mode of production to the socialist mode of production. Those NGOs (or even the VOs), who fear to engage with this

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<sup>31</sup>These insightful observation **in bold fonts** on education along with the related observation in the following paragraph are of fundamental significance to the crisis facing India's education system. The crisis is also reflected in the lives of the educated youth of the Devapur Project villages. The author has raised agonising questions based upon his disturbing observations on the social role of the educated youth (See Introduction, Footnote 23 and the relevant paragraph excerpted on pp. 29-30 from the Chapter 10).

ideological challenge and feign to be apolitical, do more damage to society than those who remain passive. *This path calls for unlearning our typically ahistorical and unscientific mode of thinking.* There is hope if we decide to learn from the 20<sup>th</sup> century history of the inspiring socialist experiments in different parts of the world. When we do this, we will ensure that we learn about the great potential of these experiments while, at the same time, not ignore the inevitable historical errors and misjudgements that led to the fragmentation of the great socialist vision. The weakening of the international socialist movement during 1990s opened up dangerous corridors for the neoliberal capital to march ahead, thereby enslaving the global economy along with the human mind and the popular culture of the struggling working class<sup>32</sup>.

Indeed, historically speaking, there is no space whatsoever for frustration or despondency experienced by the author during the last phase of the Devapur Project and thereafter, though his later realisation, as mentioned above, of the role of mass movements to effect social transformation has rekindled hope. Rather, it is time that we prepare ourselves for a protracted struggle with a view to decisively intervene in the state's prevailing socio-political and institutional structures and processes, which have now assumed dangerous neo-liberal forms, reinforced by the *Hindu Rashtra* ideology, in order to bring about pro-people changes therein. But this cannot happen without simultaneously mobilizing the masses for building resistance to the capitalist model of development and to explore and create an alternative socialist model. It must also be underlined that *it is not enough to oppose* the various agencies of the global capitalism viz., World Bank, IMF, WTO and other international funding agencies. Strategically, this, too, may have to be done. Our real battle, however, is for demolishing capitalism and replacing it with socialism aimed at creating a new human being for

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<sup>32</sup>In this context, it is imperative that we deconstruct the counter-revolutionary role played by digitalisation, at the behest of neoliberalism, to "enslave the human mind and the popular culture of the working class." See Footnote 20 in this Introduction.

a humane society, which precisely was also the lifelong pursuit of the author of this book.

In this context, Shaheed Shankar Guha Niyogi's political philosophy of '*Sangharsh aur Nirman*' i.e. 'Struggle and Reconstruction', developed during the historic struggles of the iron ore mine workers in Chhattisgarh from 1977 to 1991, shows us a new radical path<sup>33</sup>. By walking on this path, we can hope to transform India as per the aspirations of the Anti-imperialist and Anti-Caste Freedom Struggle and its outcome in the form of the Constitution. This calls for critical reconstruction of the essence of Gandhi's transformative civilisational vision in *syncretic* debate with Savitribai & Jotirao Phule-Periyar-Ambedkar's historic critique of the oppressive and exploitative structures of caste and patriarchy and of both of these with Shaheed Bhagat Singh's vision of socialist reconstruction of the Indian society and polity. This twin Anti-imperialist and Anti-caste discourse of the Freedom Struggle, elaborated in the earlier part of this Introduction, is pregnant with far-reaching revolutionary implications for, not just India, but the whole of South Asia – the sub-continental region that shared, in more ways than one, the inspiring history of our common Freedom Struggle, symbolising the people's yearning for philosophical *syncretism*, as articulated by the Sufi Poets.

### **Call to Youth to Face the Reality: Redeeming the Pledge**

More than a quarter century after the Devapur Project was terminated in 1990, Suresh Suratwala, the author of this book, by then 86 years old, wrote a 64-page Monograph in 2016 entitled, 'Real Economic Problems of India: Inequality, Not Poverty; Unemployment, Not [Economic] Growth'. This Monograph was based on numerous reports, studies and data concerning India's and global socio-economic condition. These were published in a spectrum of newspapers, journals and surveys which he collected

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<sup>33</sup>Sadgopal, Anil and Namra, Shyam Bahadur (Eds.), *Sangharsh aur Nirmaan*, Rajkamal Prakashan, New Delhi, 1993.

meticulously, clipped and classified them in files, like a keen college student would have done in the pre-internet era. He backed up this material by studying the works of the French Economist Prof. Thomas Piketty, presently a world authority on inequality and poverty and also Prof. Joseph Stiglitz, an American Nobel Laureate in Economics who is now a known critic of the globalisation policies, apart from screening the writings of a range of other scholars from different countries as well.

As he analysed and internalised the knowledge, he came to the conclusion that poverty in India and the world is a direct consequence of the increasing inequalities which in turn also lead to rise in unemployment and, therefore, result in socio-political instability (see Epilogue for hard data on the dangerous levels of inequality and unemployment in India: pp. 168-170 & 170 respectively). Further, the mindless automation through digitalisation and now accelerated by Artificial Intelligence (AI) are not only massively dis-employing people but also contributing to inequality by shifting the people's income to the mega-corporates investing heavily in digital and AI technology. Neither the high rates of GDP growth nor the rising number of billionaires have any solution to this global crisis. On the contrary, they are the contributors to the problem, or more precisely, the problem itself!

The root of the aforesaid phenomenon of generating inequalities and 'producing' unemployment lies in the uncontrollable cycles of crises of global capitalism since early 2000s (the earlier crisis of 1930s led to Fascism in Europe). This compels the global capitalist forces to increasingly exploit new markets and control natural and human resources all over the world, especially in the developing countries, in order to somehow manage the crisis. This phase of global capitalism is recognised as the neo-liberal economic order wherein the Finance Capital plays a determining role. India's Parliament and our state assemblies tend to pass legislations and take decisions under the dictates of the neo-liberal capital and its

varied agencies like IMF, World Bank and WTO. In this sense, India's sovereignty is facing severe attrition.

It was in similar backdrop in October 2011 that lacs of U.S. youth adopted the Gandhian mode of non-violent protest to organise massive 'Occupy Wall Street' (OWS) movements (the New York Stock Exchange located on the Wall Street, one of the most powerful stock exchanges globally, deals with Finance Capital to 'loot' the world). The OWS movement gave the universally inspiring slogan, 'We are the 99%' i.e. while 1% of the wealthiest essentially controls the global wealth, we represent the rest of the world's people. The protesters focused on occupying banks, corporate headquarters, board meetings and college and university campuses. The OWS movement resonated the spirit of the Indian Freedom Struggle where similar 'OCCUPY' protests, like 'Burn the British Cloth' as part of the *Swadeshi* movement, the 'Salt *Satyagrah*' or mass Non-Co-operation Movements were orders of the day, thereby shaking the roots of the vast British empire.

India's university students also organised the 'Occupy UGC' movement in Delhi in October-December 2015 on two counts i.e. (i) UGC to 'restore, enhance and extend the 'Non-NET Fellowships' of the research scholars and (ii) the Govt. of India to withdraw our higher education from the portals of the WTO. While, on the first count, the battle was won and the Fellowships restored but on the second count the battle continues to date. The core agenda of the student movements in several universities has been to reverse commoditisation, centralisation and communalisation of education, apart from protecting students' educational rights with social justice and campus democracy; and also resisting caste/gender/linguistic discrimination.

Nothing less than the spirit of our Freedom Struggle and 'We are the 99%' movement is waiting to be rejuvenated in order to save India from the recurrent crises of the global capitalism resulting in neoliberal assaults on the quality of people's life and freedoms. The nation's students and youth have the required energy and

imagination to reclaim this potential of the Freedom Struggle and redefine the destiny of India's 130 crore people! Let us take inspiration from the modern messiah of equality with Social Justice; annihilation of caste and patriarchy; and building socialist economy namely, Babasaheb Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Chairperson, Drafting Committee of the Constitution of India (see Epilogue for his stimulating Constituent Assembly speech delivered on 26th November 1949: p. 166). India's youth also take inspiration from Shaheed Bhagat Singh's revolutionary thoughts to liberate India from global imperialism and, at the same time, to struggle to establish socialist economy in India. We look forward to them to realise the seriousness of the crisis our country is going through and rise together to fulfil the 'unfinished agenda' of India's Freedom Struggle and redeem the Constitutional imperatives, before it is too late! The martyrdom of Shaheed Rohith Vemula is also giving us a clarion call to "Educate! Agitate!! Organise!!!". The history shall not forgive us if we dither in fulfilling the national call given by Shaheed Bhagat Singh and his co-martyrs Shaheed Rajguru and Shaheed Sukhdev on 23rd March 1931 from the Lahore Jail. *Inquilaab Zindabaad!*

- Bhopal/20th June 2019



# 1

## GENESIS OF THE PROJECT

A sense of 'Social Responsibility' and a concern for the impoverished has permeated the evolution of the Tata House from its inception, ever since the days of its founder J. N. Tata. Creation of the various Public Trusts for the relief of distress, advancement of education, science and the arts, and provision for medical assistance, almost simultaneously with the establishment of industries, bears ample testimony to this history.

However, till 1950, the philanthropic activities of the various Tata Trusts were confined largely to the promotion of higher education and scientific research, provision of specialized medical facilities and relief of distress caused by nature such as floods, droughts, earthquakes and fires. Apart from sporadic efforts, involved in the relief of distress, which many a times covered extensive geographical areas, both urban and rural, various activities of the Tata Trusts had an urban bias. Along with National level institutions like the Indian Institute of Science (Bengaluru), the Tata Institute of Social Science (Mumbai), the Tata Memorial Hospital [for Cancer] (Mumbai), the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (Mumbai), National Centre for Performing Arts (Mumbai), the Tata Energy Research Institute and the National Institute of Advanced Studies (Bengaluru) and various educational scholarships were of direct benefit mainly to the urban centric elite and middle classes. By and large, the population of rural areas remained outside the purview of the Tata Trusts.

Since in the ultimate analysis, the profits of the operating Tata House, which are the principle source of income for the Trusts, had

a substantial rural contribution as well, it was felt that a part of the revenues of the Trusts should be utilized specifically for the improvement of the villages, with a view to rectifying to some extent, the prevailing urban bias. After independence, as a continuation of the larger effort, one of the Trusts, namely Sir Dorabji Tata Trust (SDTT) took the first bold step to promote rural development and improve living conditions in the villages.

Early in 1951, at the instance of Dr. John Mathai, the Trustees of Sir Dorabji Tata Trust decided to concentrate its effort on all-rounded development of some selected villages in a remote and difficult area, as a pioneering experiment by the Trust. An independent body, the Rural Welfare Board (RWB), was constituted for the purpose.

The late Prof D. R. Gadgil, the then Director of the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune and who had an elaborate personal knowledge of rural Maharashtra, was requested to recommend a suitable area. In January 1952, on the advice of a team of experts from the Deccan Agricultural Association, Pune, Dr. Gadgil recommended a group of villages in the drought-prone Maan Taluka of Satara District. The Rayat Shikshan Sanstha, Satara, founded by the Late Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil, had established a network of schools, hostels and colleges in the Satara District. He readily extended full co-operation and assistance to the Trust in the execution of the Project which, in due course of time, came to be known as the DEVAPUR PROJECT, Devapur being one of the nine Project villages.

It may not be out of place to mention at this stage an otherwise well known fact that the Tata House has been a pioneer in establishing some of the basic industries in India like Steel, Power, Automobile, Textile, Chemical, Hotel etc., apart from also in the field of promoting scientific education and research, medicine & health, Social Work, Art and Culture. However, very few people in the country know that, in the industrial sector in India, the TATAs have been pioneers in the field of Rural Development too. Of late,

some of the industrial houses and business groups have become engaged in welfare activities for their labour force within their factories and /or in the surrounding vicinity, as part of their community development programme. But, generally speaking, most of these programmes are extension of their labour welfare activities, in order to keep the workers satisfied and also to maintain 'cordial' industrial relations.

However, it goes to the credit of the House of TATAs, who pioneered a comprehensive and integrated Rural Development Project, namely, the Devapur Project, as an unique experiment, in a remote and drought- prone area like the Maan Taluka of Satara District in Maharashtra, where it had no industrial or business interest at all. The Project was executed without much publicity, as a genuine 'Social Responsibility' for a period of 35 years, only for the socio-economic development of the drought-prone area, from the early 1950s onwards. In those times, hardly any industrial house thought or talked of 'Social Responsibility' which today has become a popular catch word in the industrial sector. For the TATAs, 'Social Responsibility' came naturally from within and not as part of some publicity or strategy, the only testimony for which is the fact that right from the beginning till today, the TATAs have no signboard in Maan Taluka for their Project. Yet, each and every villager of the entire area knows about the 'Tata Villages' with respect and affection.

The TATAs had also realized that rural development, apart from being an entirely new field of activity for them, is also a complex exercise - interwoven with vexed social, economic, cultural and political issues, requiring specialized approaches and diverse remedies. It was also visualized that the rural work would involve large funds in the forms of loans and deposits, apart from grants. A decision was taken that it would be more appropriate to constitute a Rural Welfare Board under the leadership of a young team of specialists in various aspects of development for planning, execution and handling programmes. Accordingly, an independent,

duly empowered 'Rural Welfare Board' (RWB) was constituted in 1953.

### **Guiding Principles of the Rural Welfare Board**

As in other fields, the Tata House showed its wisdom in the new field of rural development too by following certain cardinal principles at the very outset in order to establish its bonafides, a clean image and social concern. First and foremost, the RWB resolved that it shall not, under any circumstances whatsoever, own any landed property or buildings in the area. Instead, it shall carry out all its activities on the lands commonly owned by the people. Even for housing its staff and for constructing buildings for common welfare facilities like school, dispensary or community centre, the required land was obtained either as gift or on lease in the name of village institutions like Panchayats, Co-operatives or Schools. Experiments and demonstrations in agriculture and allied activities were carried out on the farmers' lands or on the lands of the Co-operatives or schools and hostels.

Secondly, the Board also decided that the financial assistance to the individual villages which it might have to extend should be and will be through either the co-operatives or villagers' own institutions. Indeed, it did not enter into any financial dealings with individual villagers directly. This did not come in the way of it helping deserving individuals to obtain financial help from other sources like the Government, Banks, Zilla Parishads or Panchayat Samitis.

Thirdly, it was decided right from the inception that the Board will not establish itself as an institution in the area on a permanent basis or for an indefinite period of time since this could or may create a vested interest in the area of its operation. Hence, the Board decided that it would rather work on the Project with active participation of the local people and in due course of time, within a time-frame, after achieving certain major goals and bringing the local people to a certain minimum level of economic well-being, it shall voluntarily withdraw from the area on its own, handing over the future

management to the local people and their own institutions or bodies designated by them. The rural development work, which was started in early 1950s in a group of nine villages in Maan Taluka, thus came to an end in December 1990. And there was no remorse at all on either side. Of course, the local people wanted the RWB to continue its work.

One of the salient features, of Tata's Rural Development Project in Maan Taluka, was its scientific and systematic approach. In the early 1950s, when it initiated work, a Benchmark Survey of all the engaged villages with detailed data about the area and the people was systematically carried out by the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune, at the instance of Dr. D. R. Gadgil and under the guidance and leadership of Dr. V. M. Dandekar, by an experienced rural worker and teacher in economics, Shri V. D. Deshpande. Similarly, before it decided to wind up its work, a comprehensive evaluation study was conducted by Mr. Y. S. Pandit, Head of the Department of Statistics of the Tata Industries Ltd, Mumbai, in order to assess the relative change since the Project's inception. The study also looked into the Project's successes, failures and misjudgements, so that an objective introspection could be undertaken for the guidance of those who are still in the field as well as those who were contemplating to enter into rural work.

This entire exercise of rural development by the RWB in the drought-prone area undoubtedly proved to be a great learning process for all concerned, particularly the SDTT and its rural workers who worked with dedication and commitment for a period of 35 years. To be sure, there were several failures and a large number of successes. However, both the successes and the failures helped the rural workers not only to comprehend the problems of the rural people but also to analyse the social, economic and political dynamics of the rural society. Significantly, the experience unfolded how the grass-roots level realities are remarkably different from what is normally taught in the universities and institutes or written by professionals and 'experts'. In addition, the experiment

enabled the rural workers to grasp and realize the constraints of the social structures and the prevailing socio-economic system along with the social, economic, cultural and political hurdles which a Voluntary Organization has to engage with while working within the given framework of the rural society and national policies. We also learnt about the vital role played by the ethical value system and how it undergoes changes and how these changes are ignored by the ruling classes at the cost of the emergent future society.

## **GROUND REALITIES OF THE AREA OF DEVAPUR PROJECT**

**T**he Devapur Project area, comprising nine villages selected by the RWB of SDTT, is located in the Maan Taluka of Satara District in the western state of Maharashtra (See Map, just preceding the Preface).

### **2.1 Famine Tract**

The Project area lies in the famine tract of chronically draught-prone area stretching across the eastern part of Maharashtra from Dhule District to Sangli District, generally known as the Deccan Plateau, a high level-table land, from north to south. Therefore, it comes within the rain shadow region which means that it does not receive the south-west monsoon rains during the month of June, July and August but generally gets quite a heavy shower from the north-east monsoon, with heavy winds, popularly known as the Return Monsoon or the Madras Rains, during the month of September or October which is also uncertain and irregular. It is, therefore, an extremely difficult area with poor natural resources and socio-economic conditions. The living conditions are precarious enough to render the struggle for even bare survival hard enough. The following extract from the British Government Gazetteer aptly sums up the physical environment:

“At the best of times, Maan is barren and desolate, sparsely weeded even near the river (the only one river called Maan) . . . The ordinary sources of water supply are wretchedly precarious, even for drinking . . . The rains consist chiefly of

periodical thunder storms with intervals of incessant wind and dust tampered with occasional drizzle . . . The fall is very uncertain and partial except during monsoon floods, the beds of the Maan and its feeders are dry. The area of black soil is small owing to the scanty rain and for want of water-works, whatever black soil there is yields little. The rest of soil is murum, yielding Bajri, which is easily spoilt by uncertain rains . . . Maan is subject to constant droughts."

- Gazetteer of The Bombay Presidency, Vol. XIX, Satara, 1885,  
pp. 434-436

Hence, it must be noted that the agricultural crop of Maan Taluka is not the Kharif crop but the Rabi crop taken during winter, after the September/October rains, and that, too, coarse grain which is generally either Bajri, Jawar or Maize, for both human and animal survival alike. Maan Taluka has only one river viz., Maan which is dry during most of the months in a year, except from September to December unless there is any precipitation with heavy flooding from the north-east monsoons.

In spite of all these constraints and drawbacks, which clearly indicated that the task of development would be tough and the response from the nature and the people would be slower than if a more favourable area were chosen, RWB-SDTT deliberately decided to start its first Rural Development Project in the Devapur area of Maan Taluka. It was felt that this barren and famine-stricken tract was not likely to attract the attention of the Government or any other agency for a long time to come. Therefore, if the Trust succeeded in its efforts even marginally to improve the conditions of living in the selected villages, it would have an immense demonstrative value for the entire famine belt.

All the nine villages namely, Devapur, Gangoti, Hingni, Jambhulni, Palasvade, Panwan, Pulkoti, Shirtav and Valai, included in the Project, form a natural watershed region of the two *Nalas* (natural drains or rivulets) namely, Torla and Chunkhad. These *Nalas* are the tributaries of the river Maan which ultimately flows



into the Rajewadi Tank. The three villages - Devapur, Palasvade and Hingni - are located on the Banks of Rajewadi Tank. The tank was constructed towards the close of the 19th century to harness the water of river Maan for irrigation of some villages in Sholapur District during a particularly severe famine, mainly to provide work to the people on 'KHAVATI' basis. In 1952, all these nine villages were more or less isolated from one another, as well as from the nearest town of Mhaswad, on the Satara-Pandharpur road. Mhaswad, with the then population of about 10,000 was the nearest weekly market place for the nine villages. Yet it was linked to only some of the villages by a cart track road, usable only during the dry season. Bullock cart was the only means of transport and communication for the people of the area.

## 2.2 Quality of Soil

According to the Land Records of the Government, the total area of the nine villages covered by the Project is about 35,000 acres. In 1955, the Rational Planning Corporation Ltd., Mumbai carried out a soil survey of the area, with a view to assessing the quality of the soil and ascertaining the land use pattern. After a thorough check-up of the Land Records of the Government and by means of a series of spot surveys, the soil pattern as it emerged, in terms of the traditional 'anna' valuation, was as follows: (See Table 2.1).

**Table 2.1**  
**Classification of the Area: Anna Valuation (Annewari)**

<b>Anna-Valuation</b>	<b>Area (in acres)</b>	<b>Land (%)</b>	<b>Remark</b>
Rs. 1	599	1.7	Cultivable
Annas 10 to Rs. 1	522	1.5	Cultivable
Annas 5 to Annas 10	2,377	6.8	Cultivable
Annas 2 to Annas 5	18,967	54.7	Grazing
Below Annas 2	12,256	35.3	Useless

This is a relative picture of “the course, hungry and reddish soil” in the area, which on an average, forms a cover of just 4“ to 6” of top soil. Roughly, when the Project started its work, only the first three categories of land, constituting about 10% of the total area was useful for cultivation. The fourth category is fit only for grazing, during the rainy season. The last category is rocky or murum which is practically useless and not fit for anything to grow. Thus almost 90 percent land of the total area was not cultivable.

### **2.3 Rainfall**

The rainfall in the entire Taluka of Maan is scanty and erratic, and the Project villages are no exception, with little and precarious precipitation between September and October every year. Between 1955 and 1984, the rain gauge at Devapur recorded a variation between 7.63" in 1972 to 31.33" in 1960 (See Table 2.2). The distribution of rainfall over a time is also wayward and in the peculiar topography of the area, even small quantity of concentrated rainfall leads to floods damaging wells, bunds and crops. The frequent occurrence of floods is the direct result of non-percolation of the water because of the rocky (Black Basalt) soil. The scanty and erratic rainfall easily flows unhindered through the *nallas*, resulting in poor water supply in the nine villages, both for drinking purpose as well as for irrigation which is hardly 6% of cultivable area. The summer months are quite difficult for all human beings as well as the animals.

The underground water also does not get re-charged every year because of the failure of rain almost every one or two years and lack of percolation due to hard rock below the top soil. This cruel cycle of *‘No Trees, No Greenery, No Rains, No Percolation, No Re-charge, No Water’* continues almost forever in such drought-prone areas. And even if it rains, the total average rainfall varies between 10“ to 15” at the most, in an exceptional year.

The real tragedy of Maan Taluka is its high-level table land, where it is not possible to get water from outside. There are only

two ways. Either the water is lifted from a lower level or an underground tunnel is constructed to bring water from a long distance. However both the options, being highly uneconomical, impractical and unfeasible, could not be adopted. Then, what is the way out? This is a big question mark to Science and Technology for such drought-prone areas in the country.

**Table 2.2**  
**Variation in Rainfall at Devapur**

**Total Yearly Rainfall from 1959 to 1984 (except for 1964-67)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Inches</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Inches</b>
1959	18.01	1974	22.24
1960	31.33	1975	23.68
1961	12.16	1976	11.60
1962	23.55	1977	17.63
1963	16.37	1978	11.41
1968	17.33	1979	10.13
1969	13.33	1980	9.34
1970	7.74	1981	16.83
1971	18.93	1982	8.53
1972	7.63	1983	10.86
1973	23.36	1984	14.15

## **2.4 Population and its Composition**

The total area of the nine villages is 64 square miles (about 35,000 acres) and the total population, according to 1951 Census, was 4,875 which computes to the population density of about 76 persons per square mile, with only 5.7 percent of the total population being literate. This was a rough index of the means of livelihood available in the area, when the Project started its work in 1954-55 (See Table 2.3).

**Table 2.3**  
**Population of Devapur Project Villages**

Village No.*	Census				Survey Estimates		
	1951	1961	1971	1981	59-60	71-72	83-84
1.	490	820	1,171	1,694	666	1,394	1,575
2.	495	664	774	762	646	927	956
3.	628	1,067	1,134	1,726	1,120	1,722	2,012
4.	857	1,125	1,163	1,359	1,138	1,704	2,612
5.	178	312	413	527	385	711	819
6.	691	768	1,103	862	855	2,091	2,193
7.	604	778	863	976	668	1,236	1,506
8.	295	319	412	546	298	474	925
9.	637	542	1,014	688	774	1,791	2,238
<b>Village</b>	<b>4,875</b>	<b>6,395</b>	<b>8,047</b>	<b>9,140</b>	<b>6,550</b>	<b>11,790</b>	<b>14,836</b>

\*Numerical Notation for Project Villages – 1. Devapur; 2. Gangoti ; 3. Hingni; 4. Jambhulni; 5. Palasvade; 6. Panwan; 7. Pulkoti; 8. Shirtav; 9. Valai.

Notes: Census figure represents the number of persons actually present on the enumeration date. These seem to be inconsistent and unreliable.

The survey estimates relate to the whole year and include the number of seasonal out-migrants.

**Table 2.4**  
**Classification of Population By Age: 1983-84\***

Villages No. **	Age below 15 years		Age 15-16 years		Age above 60 years		Total	Average family size
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	
1.	72	28.6	162	64.3	18	7.1	252	6.3
2.	55	35.9	85	55.6	13	8.5	153	5.5
3.	108	33.5	184	57.2	30	9.3	322	6.4
4.	144	34.5	243	58.1	31	7.4	418	6.0
5.	43	32.8	76	58.0	12	9.2	131	6.5
6.	134	38.2	201	57.3	16	4.5	351	7.8
7.	72	29.9	150	62.2	19	7.9	241	5.2
8.	56	37.8	84	56.8	8	5.4	148	5.9
9.	154	43.3	194	54.2	10	2.8	358	7.2
<b>All</b>	<b>838</b>	<b>35.3</b>	<b>1379</b>	<b>58.1</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>2374</b>	<b>6.3</b>

\*Based on 16.6% sample.

\*\*Numerical Notation for Project Villages: See Tables 2.3 or 2.5 for the key.

Although thinly populated, the people represented a number of castes and sub-castes and the pattern differs from village to village (See Table 2.5). The *Lonaris*, the lime makers, with about 24 percent, were predominantly in the three villages of Valai, Panwan & Jambhulni; while *Dhangars*, the shepherds, with 22 percent were more to be found in Gangoti, Pulkoti, Shirtav and Palasvade; while *Marathas* with 18 percent were mainly in Devapur, Hingni, Palasvade and Pulkoti. The Scheduled Castes viz. *Mahar*, *Mang* and *Nava Baudhs* with about 11 percent were spread over in almost all the nine villages, while the Nomadic Tribe (*Vimukta Jati*) *Ramoshis* with ten percent were also to be found in all the nine villages according to the study undertaken in 1959-60.

None of these castes tend to have a dominating position in the area. The caste distinctions, though existing, do not affect the harmony of life in these villages, thanks to the educational and hostel movement started by Late Karamaveer Bhaurao Patil in this area. While villagers' factions do prevail in almost all the villages but are, by and large, based on caste considerations. Generally speaking, in Western Maharashtra, compared to Mahathawada or Vidarbha, caste oppression has been less of a problem on account of the educational and social awareness work carried out by Shahuji Maharaj of Kolhapur and Karamaveer Bhaurao Patil of Satara and the Mahatma Phule's Satya Shodhak movement in this area.

## **2.5 Migration of the Population**

However, it must be noted that under difficult and unfavourable natural conditions like poor soils and scarcity of water, the people of Maan Taluka in general and the nine villages in particular were left with no alternative but to migrate from their villages, particularly for the sake of the survival of their Khillar animals and a large sheep population. The outward migration was either to the Konkan region or to the erstwhile Hyderabad State in search of fodder and water for their animals and work as labourers, at least for a period of about 6-8 months in a year, between January to August. The education of the children greatly suffered due to this

regular migration of a large number of *Dhangar* and *Lonari* families, despite the fact that Karamaveer Bhaurao Patil had started primary schools and hostels in several villages. Most of the villages of the Project had a grossly deserted look for half the year due to migration.

**Table 2.5**  
**Caste-Wise Composition of Families (1959-60)\***  
(In percentage)

Caste→ Village No. **↓	A	B	C	D	E	F	Total
1.	-	1.0	36.5	17.1	23.3	22.2	100
2.	-	70.0	2.5	4.2	10.0	13.3	100
3.	-	7.8	51.9	17.0	8.7	14.6	100
4.	43.0	23.7	2.4	11.6	1.0	18.3	100
5.	1.0	45.6	21.0	12.3	13.6	6.5	100
6.	62.0	1.4	3.5	8.5	13.4	11.2	100
7.	-	38.1	29.4	6.3	13.5	12.7	100
8.	-	44.6	-	12.3	21.5	21.6	100
9.	77.0	2.8	-	5.6	0.7	13.9	100
<b>1959-60</b>	<b>23.7</b>	<b>22.1</b>	<b>18.1</b>	<b>10.8</b>	<b>10.3</b>	<b>15.0</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>1983-84</b>	<b>26.2</b>	<b>22.2</b>	<b>19.3</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>12.8</b>	<b>100</b>

\* Alphabetical Notation for Castes: A. *Lonari*; B. *Dhangad* (Shepherd); C. *Maratha*; D. SCs; E. *Ramoshi*; F. Others.

\*\* Numerical Notation for Project Villages – 1. Devapur; 2. Gangoti ; 3. Hingni; 4. Jambhulni; 5. Palasvade; 6. Panwan; 7. Pulkoti; 8. Shirtav; 9. Valai.

## 2.6 Rajewadi Tank

This all earthen tank constructed by the British rulers on the Maan River proved to be a ray of hope when the Government started leasing out the silted land known as Galper Lands to the local people of the three villages of Devapur, Hingni and Palasvade. Since the soil of the tank-bed was rich in quality and full of moisture, just the sowing of the seed and harvesting the crop before the tank gets filled-up was all what was needed. It proved to be a great boon when Co-op Farming Societies of the three villages were formed with long lease from the Government. In some exceptional

years, the tank-bed provided huge crop of fodder sufficient enough for the whole Maan Taluka. In due course of time, the Ramoshi community also formed a Fishing Co-op Society and harvested substantial yield of fish from the tank. The RWB-SDTT played a crucial role in organizing and managing these Farming and Fishing Co-operatives, thereby providing invaluable means of seasonal livelihood to the local people.

Briefly, this was the nature and endowment of the area, basically adverse because of the non-availability of rains as well as underground water, where the RWB-SDTT launched its first ever Project for Rural Development. It was well understood, recognized and realized by all concerned that the task is not going to be easy one at all, but the resolve with will-power was strong enough to fight against nature and all odds. This has been the guiding spirit of the RWB-SDTT and Late Karamaveer Bhaurao Patil. Tentatively, a timeframe of 10 years was envisaged but surmounting one problem after another went on extending the period year after year. This was indeed a tough fight against nature. Ultimately, the hard work by the people of Maan, with critical support from the RWB-SDTT succeeded in making the nine villages an 'Oasis in the Desert'!

The following account will disclose that, by sheer hard and sustained work for about 35 years, the RWB-SDTT were able to bring about some basic changes in terms of the volume of agricultural production and change in the cropping pattern, with one cash crop in pockets of irrigation. This led to an increase in the total income as well as per capita income of the family. With the provision of basic infra-structure like water, electricity, roads, communication, and transport, through a comprehensive and integrated programme of water conservation, so essential for sustained development, the progress achieved has been noteworthy.

At this stage, it is necessary to bring out how rural development work in Maan Taluka villages differs from other rural areas in the vicinity of big cities and towns. In the latter circumstance, the basic infrastructure like water, power, roads,

markets and other such facilities are readily available and one has to just carry out agricultural extension work with various modern inputs. But in the villages of Maan Taluka, where no basic infrastructure was available, the RWB-SDTT had to first create this infrastructure, which itself took more than 20 years out of the total of 35 years it worked. The RWB-SDTT had to initially make huge efforts of developing, generating and moulding the natural resources of the area along with the minds of people, before any benefits could be realized. This major difference between the rural development work in a drought-prone region and any other developed area is widely acknowledged by experts. The same yardstick to measure rural development cannot be used in two such different regions.

It, therefore goes to the credit of RWB-SDTT that it could engage a dedicated and committed small team of specialists, who not only lived in the villages but also worked with the people under difficult conditions, without proper housing, sanitation, electricity, water facilities and moved around on bi-cycles round the clock for years, without caring for their personal facilities and other amenities like proper food, water, education and recreation for themselves and their families. This sacrifice enabled the team to establish a good rapport with the local people and helped it in winning their goodwill and support. The villagers soon became the teachers of the field workers. The reverse process of learning from the wisdom and experience of the villagers started. It calls for sustained interaction over prolonged period in order to understand and recognize the stark realities of the life of the villagers and their problems and genuine felt-needs. ***There is no short-cut or the so-called 'modern' method for this but to live and work with the people with empathy and sensitivity. It is only by identifying with them, their families, their hardships, their problems, their misery, sufferings and aspirations that one can hope to understand them and win their confidence. No book or University Degree can give this experience, insight and wisdom.***



## **RWB APPROACH TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT: CONTENT & CHARACTER**

The problems of rural India are multiple and massive, calling for a determined and sustained effort both by the state and the people to tackle them effectively. Philanthropy by the Tata House has not lagged behind in this great task. SDTT approaches its work in a spirit of science with humility. There is consciousness that it has much to learn and perhaps little to teach. And, therefore, in a spirit of co-operation, it seeks to learn and share its knowledge and experiences with those for whom the development of rural India is an abiding faith.

As stated earlier, SDTT undertook the responsibility of rural development of Devapur Project in 1952. For proper planning, implementation, administration, supervision and monitoring the above project, SDTT constituted a Rural Welfare Board (RWB) in 1953. The RWB, apart from initiating and undertaking a large number of development and welfare programmes on its own, also co-operated and collaborated with the Government and the VOs for joint projects by supplementing financial support, as and when required. Thus, it also played an important catalytic role as a liaison agency, to accelerate the process of development.

The Rural Development Programme adopted by the Rural Welfare Board can be envisaged in two parts, namely:

- (i) *Economic Development Programmes, and*
- (ii) *Social Welfare Programmes.*

These two parts together make it a comprehensive and integrated rural development programme, for an all round betterment of the living conditions of people of a selected area.

### **3.1 Economic Development Programmes**

After preliminary investigations and initial survey of the area, the RWB recognized and identified two major problems of high priority, namely, (i) extreme scarcity of water, both for drinking purpose as well as irrigation of dry lands, due to uncertain, irregular and meagre rainfall in the area; and (ii) poor, coarse and hardy soil with low fertility due to heavy erosion for decades, if not even longer. The Project area does not get the normal south-west monsoon during June, July and August but receives heavy downpour from the north-east monsoon in September and October. The area also forms part of the Deccan Plateau with Black Basalt rock, where the percolation of rain water underground is minimum and that too, only in some small pockets. The RWB started work to engage with and resolve these problems on a priority basis.

#### **3.1.1 Conservation of Soil and Water: Watershed Development**

Since the RWB did not possess the required technical person power and administrative machinery, it approached the State Government for undertaking Contour Bunding work on an extensive basis in the nine Project villages. But the Government at that time had no funds for this purpose. Hence, the RWB gave an interest-free loan of Rs. 2.5 lakh to the Agricultural Department for undertaking Contour Bunding work in the nine villages. In due course of time, the Government also made available further funds and expanded the Contour Bunding work to the whole of Maan Taluka by establishing a Sub-Division. This programme continued for the next 10 years and almost the entire 'bundable' area in the nine villages was covered by Contour Bunds. In addition to Contour Bunding, all other measures like *Nalla* Bunding, Percolation Tanks and Contour Trenching were undertaken on a large scale during the 1960s and 1970s, with the co-operation of the Government in order

to conserve each and every drop of rain water. The area covered under the Watershed Development programme was in the Torla-Chunkhad Valley right from the mountain range of the village Valai in the west, the Ridge Point, to the lowest point near Hingni and Palasvade villages on the banks of Rajewadi Tank. The RWB arranged the labour wages for the above work with the co-operation of the Government and other agencies. After the severe drought of 1972 in Maharashtra, RWB was successful in getting help from the Catholic Relief Service (CRS) and United States Catholic Conference in kind e.g. Wheat, Bulgur and Soybean Oil, under PL 480, which helped it to implement the 'Food for Work Programme'.

As a result of the above water conservation work, the underground water level improved significantly in almost all the villages. Hence, as a follow-up, a large programme of excavating new open wells along with deepening and renovation of old and obsolete wells was undertaken under the 'Food for Work Programme' of the CRS. Under this follow-up, 500 new wells were created and 500 old wells in the nine villages were renovated. The Government, RWB and 'Food for Work Programme' significantly contributed to the gigantic task of water conservation. By the end of 1980s, no feasible site for percolation tank was left out in the nine villages. This built up the irrigation potential of the area which in turn helped the farmers to begin to take at least two agricultural crops, one of which was a cash crop like cotton, groundnut, sugarcane, onion and chillies. Thus, the entire cropping pattern of the nine villages slowly but steadily underwent a remarkable change, thereby increasing the total production and income of the farmers by several-fold.

However, the RWB was not satisfied by only conserving water and improving the underground water table of the area. After much hard work, it was able to identify two sites for medium-size Irrigation Tanks on two *nallas* namely Chunkhad and Torla near the villages of Pulkoti and Gangoti and it was further successful in persuading the Irrigation Department to undertake the same with the

necessary canal system, which increased the total area under irrigation considerably (See Table 3.1).

**Table 3.1**  
**Proportion of Cultivated Land Under Irrigation**  
Comparative Statement (in percentages)

No.	Villages	1959-60	1971-72	1983-84
1	Devapur	5.0	17.6	19.2
2	Gangoti	4.5	8.8	10.6
3	Hingni	2.5	9.2	10.2
4	Jambhulni	7.7	18.2	18.7
5	Palasvade	3.3	12.7	17.1
6	Panwan	7.2	16.5	19.1
7	Pulkoti	7.7	14.0	17.9
8	Shirtav	9.9	20.5	23.9
9	Valai	6.9	12.6	17.3
<b>All villages</b>		<b>5.6</b>	<b>13.8</b>	<b>16.3</b>

### 3.1.2 Lift Irrigation Schemes

As a long-term impact of the above large-scale Watershed Development Programme in the nine villages on an extensive and intensive basis, the underground water level substantially improved in the entire area. However, each and every farmer was not able to build his/her individual open well for irrigation. Hence, on the initiation and inspiration of RWB small groups of farmers ranging from 5 to 25 came together to excavate large-size common wells, install electric pump sets and lay plastic pipe lines for delivery of water to their fields. Thus mini-lift irrigation schemes were started in almost all the villages. All these efforts led to a substantial increase in the total land acreage under irrigation, with at least two crops. Thanks to the 'Employment Guarantee Scheme' of the Government and the 'Food for Work Programme' of CRS, it became possible to implement the scheme successfully. RWB played a vital role in the liaison work from outside the Government, Voluntary

Organisations and private agencies, with a view to utilizing all their resources optimally and supplementing them whenever and wherever necessary. About a hundred such Lift Irrigation Schemes of small and big groups came into existence and are still in operation in the nine villages of the Devapur Project, undertaken as a Joint Venture in co-operation with several agencies. The Bank of Maharashtra, Mhaswad Branch, also played a significant role in providing loans for the purchase of pumpsets and pipes, while Food for Work Programme of CRS helped in providing unskilled work to the local people, most of whom were the direct beneficiaries of the excavation of wells and trenches.

**Table 3.2**  
**Lift Irrigation Schemes**

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Villages</b>	<b>No. of Schemes</b>
1	Devapur	16
2	Gangoti	07
3	Hingni	17
4	Jambhulni	07
5	Palasvade	13
6	Panwan	07
7	Pulkoti	05
8	Shirtav	08
9	Valai	10
<b>Total</b>		<b>90</b>

RWB, directly as well as indirectly, helped in organizing about 100 small and medium size Lift Irrigation Schemes, by providing several type of inputs required, right from excavation, construction of wells, installation of pump sets and laying of the pipe lines. Thus, small and marginal farmers, who would have never got the benefit of irrigation facility, were able to obtain water for irrigation, take two crops and increase their production and income, through the means of Co-operative or Joint Lift Irrigation Schemes. The most

critical role in this whole process is to bring the small and marginal farmers together and work on the basis of mutual benefit. This vital and critical role was played by the field workers of the RWB. Similar type of Lift Irrigation Schemes were also organized for the members of the weaker sections belonging to SCs/STs but unfortunately after initial enthusiasm, most of them did not work for some reason or other.

**Table 3.3**  
**Lift Irrigation Co-Operatives for Weaker Sections**

<b>Village No.*↓</b>	<b>I**</b>	<b>II</b>	<b>III</b>	<b>IV Rs.(in Lakhs)</b>	<b>V Rs.(in Lakhs)</b>	<b>VI Rs.(in Lakhs)</b>	<b>VII In Acres</b>
<b>1</b>	03	77	Dhangars	3.50	1.23	2.27	167
<b>2</b>	02	67	Dalits & Muslims	8.50	4.49	3.56	250
<b>3</b>	01	13	Dalits	0.73	0.40	0.33	25
<b>4</b>	01	15	Dalits	1.57	0.21	1.36	25
<b>5</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>6</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>7</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>8</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>9</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	<b>07</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>14.30</b>	<b>6.73</b>	<b>7.52</b>	<b>467</b>

\*Numerical Notation for Project Villages – 1. Devapur; 2. Gangoti ; 3. Hingni; 4. Jambhulni; 5. Palasvade; 6. Panwan; 7. Pulkoti; 8. Shirtav; 9. Valai.

\*\*Numerical Notation for Column Titles – I. No. of Co-operatives; II. No. of Beneficiary Families; III. Beneficiary Communities; IV. Bank Loan; V. Govt. Subsidy; VI. Net Liability; VII. Total Irrigated Area (in Acres).

On the whole, the contribution of the RWB and several co-operating official and private agencies in the conservation, proper utilization and management of the most valuable water resource in the area during the last so many years has been tremendous. In short, it has enabled the RWB to totally change the face of the area by multiple cropping of cash crops, increase in production and income and improvement of the standard of living. With the availability of more water, considerable fallow land was brought under cultivation with the use of tractors. With the use of improved seeds, fertilizers and pesticides, the yield per acre increased.

### 3.1.3 Advent of Electricity

The RWB had for long realized the importance of electric power for its Project villages. In the absence of electricity, residential lighting depends on kerosene lamp and water pumps depend on diesel engine. The students find it difficult to study at night under kerosene lamps. Several medicines and vaccines need refrigeration which also needs electricity. Therefore, such medicines and vaccines are not available to villagers. Modern facilities depending on electric power cannot be extended to the impoverished village people. This was the condition of the Devapur Project villages in 1952. There were several constraints in bringing electricity to the area. In 1972, when RWB approached the Maharashtra State Electricity Board (MSEB) to extend power to the nine villages of its Project from the nearby town of Mhasvad, the Board put forth the issue of scarcity of funds and sought a guarantee of minimum of 20% of revenue return. The RWB persisted and offered to give a loan to the MSEB to the tune of Rs. 7 lakhs and ultimately persuaded the MSEB to extend electric power to the Project villages, which happened before the end of 1972.

The availability of electric power to all the nine villages, apart from its domestic use in individual houses and on roads and public places for lighting, gave a boost to irrigated agriculture with the use of electric pumpsets on almost all the wells in the area. The running cost of electric pumpset was quite low and, as compared to diesel engine pumpset, its operation was more efficient and convenient. The electric power reduced the cost of production of crops under irrigation. This made it possible to bring increasingly more and more land under irrigation along with a total change in the cropping pattern, fetching reasonable income with profit. In pre-power times, manual *chakkies* were operated in villages. But after the advent of electricity, more than one and in some cases two to three flour mills, started operating in each of the nine villages, giving a great relief to the women folk. In due course of time, it also brought the telephone line to one or two villages, a faster means of communication.

### **3.1.4 Horticulture**

Right from its inception, RWB has been encouraging and promoting Horticulture, by providing quality fruit plants like guava, chikoo, mango, coconut, pomegranate and others to the farmers at subsidized rates. Out of all the different varieties of fruit grafts distributed, it was found that pomegranate, which is a hardy plant and requires minimum water, has proved to be the most successful and promising one. The farmers concentrated on the cultivation of pomegranate on a large scale, particularly in the two villages of Devapur and Palasvade. More than 100 acres of pomegranate with drip irrigation is now grown as ready market is also available. It has proved to be a good income-generating field. Pomegranates are exported to Dubai and other Gulf countries.

### **3.1.5 Afforestation**

As already mentioned, the villages of the Devapur Project were in drought-prone region, with meagre and irregular rainfall. Therefore, no programme like Afforestation/Social Forestry/Planting of trees was possible. The supply of fodder, fuel and timber were the major needs of the people, apart from the improvement of the environment of these villages. The RWB therefore, with the cooperation of the Department of Social Forestry and the Forest Department, undertook a huge programme of tree plantation in each of the nine villages. In all, more than 10,000 trees were planted in small plots of demarcated land in most of the villages and the survival rate was also good. At Shirtav a forest nursery was developed for supply of plants to all the nine villages.

### **3.1.6 Joint Farming Co-operatives**

As reported earlier, the Rajewadi Irrigation Tank, constructed by British rulers on the Maan River on the border of the Satara and Sholapur Districts, is now more than 100 years old and is filled up with invaluable silt. The silt could retain moisture for a long time and also easily grow one crop without irrigation, even after the water of the tank is released to the villages in Sholapur District.



This fertile soil was earlier auctioned by the Irrigation Department of the state government. The rich traders and businessman used to take the land on auction and then release it to the local farmers of the three villages of Devapur, Palasvade and Hingni of the RWB Project, on a 50% share basis of the rich crop harvest. The local people were being regularly exploited and therefore Late Karamaveer Bhaurao Patil, along with RWB's support approached the State Government and prevailed upon them to stop this exploitative practice. The government was persuaded to pass a General Resolution under which the local farmers of the three villages formed Joint Farming Co-operative Societies and the tank bed lands (*Galper Zamin*) were leased out to the three Co-operative Societies on a long-term lease for the purpose of cultivation. This was a great achievement for the local people, particularly because the farmers of these three villages had lost their own land in the submergence area of the tank. This rich silt land gave the farmers at least one good crop as and when the water was released for irrigation and the lands became available for cultivation. Presently, the local villagers have dug up several irrigation wells within the tank-bed and are getting good crops. The government has also allowed the farmers to remove the silt from the tank and put it in their eroded lands at the higher level where the younger farmers have now taken up cultivation of pomegranate on about 100 acres as a dry-land horticultural crop for which there is a good market not only in Mumbai but also an export market in Gulf countries. In short, the process of income generation and improvement in the standard of living in these villages had taken place, as against the earlier exploitation by local traders. This indeed is a far reaching change for the people due to the efforts of RWB. To fight the local vested interest in itself is a noteworthy achievement which cannot be and must not be measured in terms of only monetary yardstick.

### **3.1.7 Fishing Co-operative for Ramoshis**

A new activity in the form of fishing in the Rajewadi Tank was taken up by the Ramoshi Community of Devapur by forming a

Fishing Co-operative, thereby preventing the private leasing rights of fishing being given to the outsiders, as was also achieved in the case of Joint Farming Co-operatives. New methods were employed with the introduction of Nylon Nets with Government subsidy. Arrangements were made each year through the Department of Fisheries to release the improved variety of fishlings in the Tank which increased the total catch of the members of the Co-operative. Efforts were made to introduce boats but it did not work due to high cost. Ultimately, the practice of using 'truck tyres' continued for going into deep waters for fishing. The traders-buyers would come to Devapur from distant places like Satara, Sholapur, Sangli and Kolhapur and buy the catch through cash payment on the spot. Thus, a valuable income generating activity became sustainable in Devapur due to the efforts of RWB. It will be pertinent to note that the entire benefit of the fishing activity went to the Ramoshi Community who have been classified as backward criminal Tribe since the British days.

### **3.1.8 Target-Oriented Programmes for Weaker Sections**

All along, RWB made special efforts to involve the weaker sections in the mainstream of the village life. It gave high priority to the weaker sections with a view to enable them to improve their socio-economic conditions. Apart from the two Housing Co-operatives at Devapur and Pulkoti specifically for them, the members of the weaker sections, particularly Mahars and Ramoshis were encouraged to undertake Sheep Rearing, Goat keeping and Fishing. RWB made arrangements with the Bank of Maharashtra to provide them with loans on a concessional annual interest rate of 4.5% along with partial subsidy from RWB itself. More than 75 such families took the benefit of such programmes and also repaid the loans. In all, about 125 new Sheep Units at a total cost of Rs. 4 lakhs were established by these families in due course of time.

A few amongst the Ramoshi and Mahar communities also owned some land but were not cultivating them because of the non-availability of other inputs like bullocks, water and seeds. For them,

RWB went out of its way and made special arrangements to bring them together and form Group Lift Irrigation Schemes with financial assistance from Banks, Social Welfare Department and RWB itself. In all, 7 major Lift Irrigation Schemes in four different villages namely 3 schemes in Gangoti, 2 in Hingni, 1 in Panwan and 1 in Pulkoti were designed, completed and made operational at a total investment of about 14 lakhs from all available sources, with a capacity to irrigate about 470 acres of land and benefiting 167 families.

It was our expectation that by providing the above support of productive economic assets may lead them to become self-reliant and improve their standard of living. However, this did not happen. It is our experience that partly due to several social and economic constraints on them, partly because of the lack of the holding capacity till agriculture crops are harvested, but mainly because of their sheer un-willingness to work hard on the basis of co-operation, it is rather difficult to improve their lot despite the support from such specially targeted programmes. Ironically, they incrementally became more idle and reluctant to work hard. Hence, despite all such assets being made available, such programmes have not become sustainable.

### **3.1.9 Cattle Breeding**

Right from its inception, RWB recognized and accepted the classification by experts of Maan Taluka and for that matter most of the drought-prone areas of Deccan Plateau in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, as primarily a LIVESTOCK ECONOMY and not an economy based on farming. The breeding and production of hardy and stone breeds of cattle namely KHILLAR sheep and goats of the *deshi* breeds has been traditionally a popular source of livelihood in these regions. This is chiefly due to scanty rainfall rendering the soils suitable for growing only grasses for grazing and survival of cattle.

RWB from the very outset also encouraged breeding and maintenance of selected good quality Khillar Stud Premium Bulls.

These are locally known as MHASWAD KHILLAR for its propagation and promotion as a Work Animal because it could survive under the limited supply of fodder from grassland and scanty water easily on rocky soils of areas like Maan Taluka. RWB started providing Stud Premium Bulls to a selected one or two farmers in each of the nine villages for giving breeding service at a nominal charge to the cows of the other farmers. This programme did have a limited success. RWB wanted to go further by providing a dual purpose animal which could be used for farming operations and, at the same time, while retaining the hardy qualities, could also give some milk for the family and as source of at least limited income. It was un-economic to maintain cows and bulls for farming operations and buffaloes for milk.

Hence, a Dairy Expert was appointed by RWB for cross-breeding of the Khillar Cows, not with any of the delicate foreign breeds like Jersey or Holstein-Friesian (HF), but with an improved Indian Hardy Breed like Tharparkar, popular in Rajasthan and Haryana. In 1959, a Cattle Breeding Centre (CBC) was established at Hingni (Dhokmod) for systematic work to evolve a dual purpose breed by crossing Khillar with Tharparkar. Encouraging results were observed soon. With proper feeding and good management, the cross-bred cows gave on an average daily yield of about 5-7 litres of milk, the maximum being up to 10 litres. This was a joint project of the existing three Co-operative Farming Societies at Devapur, Palasvade and Hingni, who made available 50 acres each of their Tank-Bed lands in Rajewadi Tank. The major part of the finance came from RWB. In 1960, the CBC became operational with a herd of 30 animals. The CBC was expected to become self-sufficient financially within 5 years. However, on account of heavy cost of building shed and purchase of animals and substantial recurring expenses on staff, purchase of fodder and other contingencies, the centre could not reach a break-even point. At the same time, the farmers did not show genuine interest in a dual purpose animal because of their traditional attachment to the Khillar

cattle. There were some difficulties in marketing the milk of the cross-bred cows as well. The centre, therefore, went into loss and ultimately had to be closed. Yet, demonstrating the value of a dual purpose animal through research on Khillar and Tharparkar was acclaimed all over the country.

### **3.1.10 Cattle Breeding Centre**

Earlier we have stated how RWB started a CBC under the guidance and supervision of a Dairy expert to make Khillar breed a dual purpose animal suitable both for work purpose and providing some milk, by crossing it with an indigenous Indian improved breed viz., Tharparkar. The CBC successfully demonstrated this objective in a large measure by the end of 1984.

However, this research and experiment could not reach the farmers. Whether the farmers failed to appreciate the advantage of the good work done by CBC is a moot issue. The milk production in Devapur, Hingni, and Palasvade definitely increased and marketing of milk to the Government milk scheme was also arranged. But even this unfortunately did not last long. Between 1980-81 and 1983-84, nearly 100 Khillar X Tharparkar cows were given to the farmers, with 80% loan from State Bank of India and remaining 20% as grant-subsidy from RWB. Nevertheless, the logistic problems of collecting milk and marketing still remained a hurdle. In spite of this, the Dairy Farming experience continued to hold its promise as an income generating activity. Despite the initial setback to cattle breeding and dairy farming by RWB, the young farmers' groups have taken the initiative. Two educated young farmers, after undergoing training in Artificial Insemination and Animal Husbandry Management in a 6-month course at Bharatiya Agro-Industries Foundation (BAIF), Urulikanchan (near Pune), started an Artificial Insemination Centre at Devapur. The response of the farmers of the surrounding villages was very good. The idea behind this activity was to provide cross-bred good quality animals to the farmers at an economical price instead of buying a costly cross-bred animal at the price of about Rs. 25000/-. Artificial

Insemination will provide the same type of animal at a price of only Rs. 50/- i.e. the cost of Artificial Insemination. This initiative appeared to be quite a promising one, similar to the cultivation of pomegranate in horticulture.

### **3.1.11 Sisal / Agave Fibre Centre**

It is well known that Sisal or Agave plants are most suitable for famine and drought-prone regions of not only in India but all over the world, particularly the African countries because of their extreme hardiness and capacity to survive without water or even moisture. In our country, particularly in Maharashtra a Scheduled Caste community known as Mang/Matang samaj have been extracting fibre from the leaves of Sisal/Agave plants growing wildly as well as planted on bunds and uncultivable lands for making ropes required by the farmers for agricultural use, on a traditionally barter system. Under the barter system, the Mang/Matang families provide ropes required by the farmers in exchange of food-grains on a half-yearly crop basis. The traditional method of extracting fibre was by decomposing the leaves in village stream after removing the thorns on the leaves. The extraction process used by them was slow requiring 3 to 4 weeks. The fibre thus extracted was dull in appearance, neither white nor bright.

RWB supported this activity by establishing a Sisal/Agave Fibre Centre which encouraged plantation of Sisal/Agave on contour bunds to provide the village people the raw material for rope making. In due course, RWB had planted Sisal/Agave succulent plants in lakhs on the bunds of area. In order to promote the extraction of fibre on a scientific basis with the help of 'Decorticator Machine' and produce good quality fibre for making fancy items like bags and purses, besides ropes, RWB took an initiative to start a small Fibre Processing Unit at the village Shirtav, with the help of Khadi & Village Industries Board, on a co-operative basis with Mang/Matang families as its members. The Centre worked for a couple of years and provided employment to about 20-30 Mang families. However, the demand for Sisal ropes

could not be sustained in the market due to severe competition from mechanized rope factories and the newly developed nylon ropes. Hence, marketing of Sisal/Agave ropes became a huge problem and RBW had to ultimately close the Centre.

### **3.1.12 Establishment of Co-op Cotton Ginning Factory**

It is interesting to note how in the development process an action leads to not just another reaction but a chain of reactions. When one problem is solved, new problems may arise. The cotton growing programme of nine villages is a good example in this regard. The water conservation programme of RWB made sufficient water available for irrigation. This led to change in the cropping pattern as the farmers started adopting cultivation of cash crops like cotton. This, too, due to proper irrigation, resulted in large scale production of cotton. The surplus production led to the consequent problem of proper marketing while ensuring reasonable remunerative price. In order to overcome this problem, the cotton growers of the nine villages got together to establish a cotton Ginning Factory on a co-operative basis.

In 1971-72, the proportion of cotton in the total value of agricultural production, which itself had recorded a large increase during the preceding 13 years, was 15.7% as compared to only 5.6% in 1959-60. Thanks to water conservation and its utilization for cotton, there was a surplus of cotton production. The people of Devapur Project were facing marketing problem for the last few years, as they had to go long distance to places like Phaltan and wait for days together for weighing, selling and procuring good price. Transport and handling charges involved a sharp cut in the net price they received. Thus, the increased cotton production led to hitherto unknown new problems, including the prolonged absence of the farmers from their families and villages.

In order to overcome the aforesaid difficulties and to enable the cotton growers to market their cotton locally at remunerative price, the RWB sponsored an ambitious scheme for establishment of a Ginning Factory at Devapur on a co-operative basis. It

suggested that the required share capital be raised from all the nine villages of the Project. There was already a Co-operative Ginning Unit at Gondavale in Maan Taluka and, therefore, it was a difficult task to get a second unit registered at Devapur. However, the enthusiasm of the people was so overwhelming that within about 10 days' time, they managed to raise the share capital of Rs. 1.20 lakh (Rs. 1,20,000/-). After vigorous and persistent effort by all concerned and having complied with all the documentary and legal requirements of the Government, the 'Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil Cotton Sale, Ginning & Pressing Co-operative Society' with a membership of 500 cotton growers of the nine villages and a share capital of Rs. 1.20 lakh was duly registered on 1st May 1979. With the introduction of the Monopoly Cotton Procurement Scheme by the Maharashtra Government in 1978, a Cotton Purchase and Collection Centre was also opened at Devapur, ensuring adequate supply of cotton for ginning from the surrounding villages, within a radius of 30 miles from the factory. Two brothers of the Village Devapur donated to the aforesaid Society a plot of 5 acres of open flat land along the side of the main road leading to Devapur. The Government of Maharashtra, as per its scheme of matching share capital, contributed an equal amount of Rs. 1.20 lakh to the Society by the end of June 1983. The Society also managed to secure a loan of Rs. 3.5 lakh from the Bank of Maharashtra for construction and purchase of ginning machine and other equipment. RWB, too, contributed to the Society a sum of Rs. 2 lakh, free of interest as Working Capital.

With the assistance of the local population in the form of voluntary labour and supply of stones required for the construction of the Ginning Factory building, the tireless hectic efforts of the RWB Field Workers and active co-operation and guidance from the then Hon'ble Minister for Co-operation, Shri N. D. Patil, the construction work of the building, erection and commissioning of twenty ginning machines was completed within a record period of 4 months by working round the clock, with amazing speed and



vigour. As a result, the Devapur Ginning Factory started functioning on 8th September 1979, giving the production of ginned raw cotton of high quality for export purpose. On the whole, the establishment of the Ginning Factory on a Co-operative basis at Devapur, was a feather in RWB's cap and proved to be a great boon to the farmers of the surrounding 30-50 villages. Apart from fetching them an attractive remunerative price for their cotton at their door steps, as a result of saving the transport, handling and contingent expenses, the operation of the Ginning Factory provided seasonal employment to about 150 labourers, both men and women, from 4-5 surrounding villages. The factory worked in three shifts round the clock and made net profit right from the first year, as can be seen from Table 3.4.

**Table 3.4**  
**Cotton Ginned and Profit Earned**

<b>Year (Ending June)</b>	<b>Quantity of Raw Cotton Ginned (in quintals)</b>	<b>Net Profit/Loss after provision of depreciation and interest</b>
1979-80	11,767.00	Rs. 1,080.00
1980-81	15,800.00	Rs. 17,715.00
1981-82	20,100.00	Rs. 21,680.00
1982-83	12,750.00	Rs. 12,970.00
1983-84	1,075.00	Rs. 5,975.00

As a result of such a superb performance in the initial period of three years, the entire loan of Rs.3.5 lakh from the Bank of Maharashtra was fully repaid along with interest and a major part of the interest-free deposit from RWB was also repaid, leaving a balance of only Rs. 40,000/- to be returned!

Unfortunately, however, just when the Factory was about to be stabilized on a profitable basis, the cotton crop in the surrounding villages was severely affected by pest attack over a wide area and

the yield per acre fell down drastically. In relation to the cost of cultivation, the procurement price offered by the Government was not sufficiently remunerative, particularly in Western Maharashtra. In contrast, the prevailing price offered in the adjoining State of Karnataka, where the cotton trade was open and free, the prices were much higher. Consequently, a large part of the raw cotton, whose production had already fallen down to a low level due to pest attack, was smuggled out. The Monopoly Procurement of Cotton Scheme of the Maharashtra Government received a great set back. In 1983-84 seasons, the quantity of raw cotton brought to the Devapur Ginning Factory was hardly 1000 quintals. The operation of the factory had to be suspended in 1983. The deteriorated situation affecting the cotton crop remained unchanged in the successive years. The first agro-based industrial experiment in the area and a major endeavour by RWB received a painful setback. A number of other ginning factories in the whole of Western Maharashtra, more or less, met the same fate and had to be closed down. The State Government has not been still able to revive the whole process and even today a large quantity of capital asset is either lying idle or has been liquidated. Here is truly a tragic story of the state of affairs of agricultural development, pricing policy and total lack of planning resulting in heavy debt for the farmers and consequent misery and suffering! Let anybody, either in the Government or in the VO/ NGO sector think twice before talking about processing of agricultural crops, leave alone taking any steps in this direction without an assured and guaranteed price and policy support from the Government on a long-term basis. The lessons learnt are most painful. May wisdom prevail in the Government before playing with the lives of the farmers! The hard working farmers with a fighting spirit, struggling for survival in a drought-prone area, were victimized not only by the nature in the form of no rain or pest attack on the crops in subsequent years, but also by the apathetic and irrational government policies.

### **3.1.13 Marketing and Supply Service: RWB's Vital Role**

Before 1978, when the Monopoly Procurement of Cotton Scheme was not in force, the farmers were allowed to sell their cotton in open market at centers like Phaltan, Baramati, Pandharpur, Akluj and Mhaswad. But the traders and middle men did not give the farmers a remunerative price. Besides, the transport and handling charges made a further sharp cut in the net price they finally received in hand.

The RWB through its good-offices with Cotton Traders in Mumbai, made arrangements for direct purchase of cotton from the villages itself. A Mumbai trader would visit all the nine villages and, after assessing the quality of cotton, would decide the price and make an offer which was invariably higher and favourable to farmers. The Mumbai trader used to weigh the cotton in the presence of the farmers and make the payment in cash on the spot. This arrangement by RWB continued for a couple of years till 1978 when the State Government re-introduced the Monopoly Procurement of Cotton Scheme.

Incidentally, it may be mentioned that RWB also made similar arrangements for the groundnut crop with the co-operation of a local oil mill in Satara, the District Headquarter. The mill owner used to come to the RWB villages and purchase the groundnut on the spot after weighing it in the farmer's presence and making cash payment on the spot. This arrangement in cotton and groundnut purchase was beneficial to both the parties - the farmers received better price of their product with clean transaction while the trader/mill owner got the crop a bit cheaper. Thus, RWB played a crucial role in arranging the marketing of the farmers' crop at a higher price.

On the other hand, the RWB through its contacts with the manufacturers, successfully arranged the supply of irrigation equipment like the electric motor and diesel engine pumpsets along with their accessories; plastic pipes; and agricultural inputs like

improved seed, fertilizer and pesticides to the farmers directly from the factory at discounted price, at cheaper rate than the open market. In return, the manufacturers got the bulk orders, making it possible for them to offer free transport for truck load of material, delivering it at the doorstep of the farmers in the village itself.

The marketing and supply service arranged by the RWB was extremely appreciated by the farmers and it did not involve any additional finance either. Bringing two interested parties at one table and through subtle negotiations, a vital service was made available by the RWB, without any formal organized structure and funds. Clearly, the local traders and merchants were not happy and tried to create obstacles. However, the unity of the farmers of the nine villages was so formidable that the vested interest could not make any dent, in spite of using all the standard tricks of the trade.

At this stage, it must be mentioned that marketing of all types of farmers' produce and supply of quality farm inputs at reasonable prices to the farmers, is supposed to be primarily the responsibility of various types of Co-operative organizations. However, these Co-operatives have not performed this vital function, thereby failing to provide both the marketing and input services to the farmers. Based upon our experience, we contend that it calls for building effective co-ordination and linkages at various levels, rather than huge funds. On a small scale, the RWB has successfully demonstrated that it is indeed possible to help the farmers in marketing their produce and organising supply of various types of inputs for them at reasonable prices by establishing linkages with the manufacturers directly and eliminating the middlemen at all levels. What we are lacking is sincere and honest organizational effort in involving appropriate structures to operate and perform their expected functions with commitment, on a sustainable basis. A lot of unnecessary wasteful expenditure on both the farmers' demand and supply could be easily avoided and the benefit passed on to them in reducing the cost of production and marketing of their produce.

### 3.1.14 Other Economic Activities

After meeting some of the basic felt-needs of the people during the 1960s, the RWB directed its attention to possible livelihood activities for income generation. Encouraged by the favourable response it received for the initial programmes and in its eagerness to bring about quick economic development of the rural people, the Board made a serious effort to develop agricultural subsidiary activities.

The people of the nine villages were already rearing poultry for livelihood on a small scale in their homes but the poultry birds were of country-*deshi* variety. Therefore, steps were taken to upgrade the poultry by providing improved variety of birds, namely White-leghorn and Ronday Island breeds, which gave higher egg production and fetched better market value too. Improved varieties of Cocks were made available along with other necessary items of poultry units. Initially, there was a good response among the farmers but, in the absence of a favourable market, the poultry farming activity flopped.

Similar efforts were made in the case of sheep-rearing by providing improved *Merino* Cross-bred rams, particularly to the *Dhangar* (shepherd) communities who traditionally maintained local *deshi* breed for their livelihood. The raw black wool from the *deshi* breed was sold to the *Sangar* community who made *Ghongdies* (Rough Blankets) in the nearby town of Mhaswad. However, the improved white wool of the *Merino* Cross Breed did not fetch a higher price. It was purchased by the traders at the same price as the black wool. Thus, the story of poultry was repeated in the case of sheep as well. The *Dhangar* community, therefore, soon lost interest in the *Merino* breed.

The main reason for the initial failure of these two highly promising agricultural subsidiary activities, otherwise most appropriate for the drought-prone region, was over-expectation in too short a time. RWB lacked realization that both poultry farming and sheep-rearing are long-term projects, requiring much planning

and patience on the part of the rural worker as well as the farmer for developing a favourable market.

## **3.2 Social Development Programmes**

### **3.2.1 Drinking Water**

Acute shortage of drinking water, every year during the summer months, caused severe hardship for the people in almost every village. However, as a direct result of extensive contour bunding work carried out in the area by the RWB there was gradual improvement in the underground water table which proved to be a boon to the people. RWB undertook a comprehensive programme of excavating and constructing a *pucca* well, in each of the nine villages, at a suitable site on the banks of the two *nallas*. By 1962, such wells ensured adequate drinking water all the year round to all the villagers, irrespective of class, caste and creed. It is noteworthy that in this RWB-sponsored project, the villagers contributed voluntary labour by hauling stones and sand required in construction work.

### **3.2.2 Wind Mills**

In due course of time, the RWB installed windmills, with a water storage tank and taps, on each of the nine drinking water wells to pump out water as an added facility. This was particularly significant for women who were otherwise required to go long distances until then to fetch water. The windmill, as an alternative renewable source of energy, was quite a new and innovative idea in Maan Taluka. Five of the windmills in the first instance were imported from Australia, while the remaining four windmills were provided to RWB by the National Aeronautical Laboratory, Bangalore.

### **3.2.3 Health Services: Primary Health Centre at Pulkoti**

Since there were no qualified doctors or dispensaries in any of the nine villages of the Project, the provision of medical facilities was a felt need. RWB took it up on a priority basis and, by 1959, a full-fledged Medical Centre, with all necessary equipment was

specially constructed at Pulkoti which was at the centre of the nine villages. A qualified doctor visited the Medical Centre, Pulkoti once every week from Mhaswad, the nearby market town, whose services were available at Mhaswad on the rest of the days as well. The Centre had a qualified compounder, a Health Visitor and two mid-wives, each of whom were in-charge of three villages, visiting them on alternate days for providing health services. The Medical Centre also undertook preventive measures against malaria, cholera, typhoid, and such ailments. On the whole, the Centre made a significant contribution towards the health and well-being of the people of the area.

### **3.2.4 Family Planning**

RWB realized the importance of the Family Planning Programme and strongly believed, promoted and propagated small family norm right from the inception of its work in the nine villages. Motivation of the villagers was not an easy task. The intensive effort by RWB, through a variety of incentives to the families and with active co-operation of the village leaders, made it possible to organize its first Family Planning Camp for vasectomy operations in 1959 successfully at village Pulkoti. However, after this camp, there was a big gap and no significant progress could be made. RWB continued its intensive effort with full enthusiasm. In 1967, the work really got a momentum and a large number of camps were held in each of the nine villages, regularly every few months. In addition to the Government incentive in cash, RWB provided some particularly innovative incentives like free medical care to the entire family for one year after vasectomy, various types of gifts in kind, preferential treatment in all other development programmes like digging of wells or installing of motor pumpsets, awarding a scholarship for higher studies and others. All these had a great impact on the success of the Family Planning Programme. The whole strategy was that all other developmental activities revolved around active participation in Family Planning. As a consequence of this focused effort, in 1976-77, the village Devapur received the

First Prize of Rs. 10,000/- in Satara District for its excellent work in Family Planning. Similarly, during 1979-80, the village Jambhulni got the First Prize in the district for its excellent performance in Family Planning.

**Table 3.5**  
**Family Planning Operations Among Eligible Couples**  
**(1983-84)\***

Villages No.** →	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total
<b>No. of Families Surveyed</b>	40	28	50	70	20	45	46	25	20	<b>344</b>
<b>Couples of Repro- ductive Age: 15-49 years</b>	49	31	46	80	23	64	38	22	65	<b>418</b>
<b>Couples Reporting Operations</b>	29	12	15	36	14	27	27	13	27	<b>200</b>
<b>Operations Carried out:</b>										
<b><u>Vasectomy</u></b>	17	12	03	25	06	10	16	07	05	<b>101</b>
<b><u>Tubectomy</u></b>	12	-	13	12	09	22	11	06	26	<b>111</b>
<b>Proportion of Eligible Couples Operated</b>	<b>59.2</b>	<b>38.7</b>	<b>32.6</b>	<b>45.0</b>	<b>60.9</b>	<b>42.2</b>	<b>71.0</b>	<b>59.1</b>	<b>41.5</b>	<b>47.8</b>

\*Based on 16.6 % sample.

\*\*Numerical Notation for Project Villages – 1. Devapur; 2. Gangoti ; 3. Hingni; 4. Jambhulni; 5. Palasvade; 6. Panwan; 7. Pulkoti; 8. Shirtav; 9. Valai.

Notes: 1. In twelve families, more than one operation were reported. 2. Operations reported by widows or couples beyond the reproductive age, at the time of survey, are excluded from the Table.

The Family Planning work of the RWB got a setback from time to time because of the contradictory and changing government policies on Family Planning. In particular, when the Government shifted its focus from Vasectomy to Tubectomy, all the hard work and sincere efforts made by the RWB in favour of male sterilization got a great setback and the momentum gradually gained by RWB



was lost. This is a noteworthy example of how the Government policies hinder the good work of the VOs which requires to be taken into consideration at the national level.

### **3.2.5 Education**

#### **(a) Primary Education**

At the time when RWB started its Project in the nine villages, two villages namely, Shirtav and Palasvade had no Primary Schools. So, the first task of the RWB was to start Primary Schools in those two villages and, in due course, to hand them over to the Zilla Parishad. The Primary Schools in the remaining seven villages had no school buildings of their own and were being held in a village temple or a chavadi. Therefore, RWB undertook a programme of constructing school buildings in each of the nine villages, with the co-operation of the Rayat Shikshan Sanstha and the District School Board. RWB also made an attempt to improve the quality of education by (a) providing educational equipment, scientific apparatus and library books; (b) holding monthly meetings of the teachers; (c) organizing Games and Sports Meet on the Republic Day for all the nine villages together; (d) encouraging excursions and visits; and (e) awarding an Ideal Teacher Prize each year; and taking other such measures.

Above all, the schools teachers were not receiving monthly salaries regularly because the Government Grants were released at the year end and the teachers had to work for several months without salaries. Therefore, the RWB made an arrangement to make regular salary payment to the school teachers on the first of every month and then, at the end of the year, recovered Government Grants which were invariably less than the total payment made by RWB to the teachers. RWB had to compensate for the deficit. Clearly, the problems of Primary Education are not as simple and easy as these are usually made out to be.

**Table 3.6**  
**Children in Age Group of 5 to 14 Years**  
**Attending School (1983-84)\***

Village No.** ↓	Total Number of Children in the Village			Number of Children Attending School			Percentage of Children Attending School		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
1	26	26	52	25	26	51	96.1	100	98.0
2	20	19	39	15	02	17	75.0	10.5	43.6
3	28	44	72	23	10	33	82.1	22.7	45.8
4	60	39	99	43	11	54	71.7	28.2	54.5
5	17	19	36	14	09	23	82.3	47.4	63.9
6	57	40	97	34	11	45	59.6	27.5	46.4
7	28	22	50	26	18	44	92.8	81.8	88.0
8	23	18	41	18	10	28	78.3	55.6	68.3
9	56	39	95	33	10	43	58.9	25.6	45.3
All Villages	315	266	581	231	107	338	73.3	40.2	58.2

\*Based on 16.6 % sample.

\*\*Numerical Notation for Project Villages – 1. Devapur; 2. Gangoti ; 3. Hingni; 4. Jambhulni; 5. Palasvade; 6. Panwan; 7. Pulkoti; 8. Shirtav; 9. Valai.

### **(b) Secondary and Senior Secondary Education**

When RWB started its work, out of nine villages, there was only one High School at Devapur and, that too, only up to class X. Consequently, the students from all the other villages had to come to Devapur after their class VII. RWB steadily started High Schools in three more villages namely Pulkoti, Jambhulni and Hingni and helped them with buildings and educational equipment in order to inspire the teachers and improve the quality of education. After passing their class X, all the students had to go out of the nine villages to pursue senior secondary education. This was extremely difficult and financially not feasible for most of the families. Thus, a substantial proportion of students discontinued their studies after High School. RWB, therefore, made a special effort in 1978 and enabled Devapur High School to start a Junior College with Science

Faculty and Animal Husbandry & Dairy as special subjects, by obtaining the necessary permission from the highest authority in the Mantralaya (Secretariat). RWB also helped the Rayat Shikshan Sanstha to construct additional buildings for the college and the Hostel from time to time and further helped by providing required equipment for laboratories and the library.

**Table 3.7**  
**Children in Age-Group of 5 to 14 Years**  
**Attending School: Comparative Statement**  
Over the Years (in percentage)

<b>Villages</b>	<b>1959-60</b>	<b>1971-72</b>	<b>1983-84</b>
Devapur	39.0	71.0	98.0
Gangoti	18.0	43.0	44.0
Hingni	17.0	36.0	46.0
Jambhulni	7.0	36.0	55.0
Palasavade	28.0	41.0	64.0
Panwan	12.0	16.0	46.0
Pulkoti	54.0	71.0	88.0
Shirtav	14.0	40.0	68.0
Valai	3.0	14.0	45.0
<b>All Villages</b>	<b>19.0</b>	<b>37.0</b>	<b>58.0</b>

### **(c) Scholarships for Higher Education**

Generally, the majority of the students in the rural areas, after completing class XII, are unable to go for University education on account of financial constraints. RWB therefore, started a scheme for awarding scholarships to the deserving students on merit-cum-means basis for pursuing Higher Education, particularly for degrees in Agriculture, Veterinary Science, Medicine and Engineering. As of now, more than 300 such students must have been supported by RWB, who are today holding respectable posts in the government departments and private establishments.

**Table 3.8**  
**Literacy: Comparative Statement Over the Years**  
**(In Percentage)**

<b>Villages</b>	<b>1959-60</b>	<b>1971-72</b>	<b>1983-84</b>
Devapur	26.0	40.0	56.0
Gangoti	12.0	22.0	27.0
Hingni	13.0	18.0	32.0
Jambhulni	10.0	14.0	29.0
Palasvade	17.0	24.0	37.0
Panwan	10.0	15.0	28.0
Pulkoti	25.0	39.0	52.0
Shirtav	11.0	20.0	39.0
Valai	4.0	14.0	21.0
<b>All Villages</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>21.3</b>	<b>34.3</b>

#### **(d) Informal Education and Training Programmes**

In addition to all the above formal educational activities, RWB found that some of the bright young talented students were unable to prove themselves in formal studies but were excellent at field level in working with their hands. Hence, RWB formed an informal group of such young farmers from the nine villages and organized monthly meeting on a rotating basis in each of the villages. These meetings were not in class rooms or a building but directly in somebody's farm where practical problems and difficulties were discussed among themselves and innovative methods to increase the yields were demonstrated. Visits to Research Centres of the Universities in Pune, Sholapur, Rahuri and others were also organized to expose the young minds to new developments. This programme was quite popular and the young farmers definitely gained from experience of ground-level experiments with improved seeds, methods, fertilizers and pesticides. Visits to Model Farms, Banks and Zilla Parishad offices transformed their outlook while also keeping them away from the lumpen elements in the village. Further, they played a crucial role in the village-level common community activities.

Even after formal withdrawal from the Project villages, SDTT continued its relations with the villagers. Since the problem of school drop-outs started becoming quite serious, SDTT helped the Rayat Shikshan Sanstha to start a Pilot Project for a period of 3 years for a short-term (six months) Vocational Training Programme by providing a total grant – capital plus recurring - of Rs. 20 Lakhs. The courses included practical training in (a) Electric Motor Winding, (b) Electrician, and (c) Two-Wheeler Repair & Maintenance, with a view to providing self-employment through their own enterprises. In addition, Skill Training was provided in (a) Stall-fed Goat Keeping, (b) Livestock & Dairy Farming and (c) Dry Land Horticulture, especially in pomegranate cultivation. Today, Devapur has about 100 acres of Pomegranate Farms.

Although quite late in the day, after the withdrawal of RWB from the area, the local young farmers have now started seeing some light in the potentiality of the Cattle Breeding Centre (CBC) and took initiative to rejuvenate the Dairy Programme implemented by RWB earlier. Two educated unemployed youth have received training in Animal Husbandry and Dairy Development at the BAIF Centre at Urulikanchan (near Pune) and started a programme in Artificial Insemination, in the hope that milk collection will start soon and provide some income to the local people.

**Computer Training:** As part of the senior secondary examination, the Junior College at Devapur introduced ‘Computer Literacy’ as a subject for the students of classes XI & XII. SDTT provided a total grant of Rs. 10 lakhs towards this Computer Training Programme. A special Computer Laboratory equipped with 20 IBM computers was set up and a qualified teacher arranged to run this programme. The programme is progressing well. Initially, about 50 students have opted for computer training by paying an annual fee of Rs. 1,500/- per student.

### **3.2.6 Co-operative Housing for Weaker Section**

It was observed by RWB, right from the beginning of its work that, in all the Project villages, the members of the Depressed (i.e.

Oppressed) Classes and Castes, namely, Mahar, Mang, Ramoshi, Hollar and others normally lived in some make-shift huts in a corner of the village. It was, therefore, felt that these sections of the society must be provided with proper housing. RWB took initiative and formed Co-operative Housing Societies in two villages, namely Devapur and Pulkoti, and constructed 36 and 25 houses in the two villages respectively, with the labour contribution from the members themselves. Each member was given an open land area of one *guntha* with a cement concrete house, using local sand, at the minimum cost of Rs. 2,500/- per house.

Besides, under the Government's Indira Awas Yojana, 10 houses each were constructed for the members of the Depressed (i.e. Oppressed) Classes and Castes at Villages Shirtav and Palasvade. By now, almost all the Project villages have been covered under this scheme and most of the members of the weaker sections of the society have been provided with *pucca* houses.

### **3.2.7 Road and Communication**

Infrastructural development of the area forms an integral part of both social and economic development of the people. RWB therefore, gave priority to the improvement of the inter-village roads and all roads connecting the market town of Mhaswad. With the co-operation of the Zilla Parishad, approximately 65 kilometers of roads were constructed, on which, in due course of time, tarring has been done. Now, there are *pucca* tar roads. RWB on its own and with financial support of the Zilla Parishad also constructed culverts and small bridges wherever necessary so as to make them all-weather roads.

When RWB started its work, the nearest Post Office was at Mhaswad only but after much persuasion, Branch Post Offices were opened at Devapur and Pulkoti. Presently, all the nine villages are also connected with telephone lines, making inter-village and external communication fast and easy.

## NATURE AND MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

As we have seen in the previous chapter, RWB worked intensively in the field of rural development - both economic and social - for about 35 years in a remote and drought-prone area. Therefore, it is but natural that RWB should give some idea regarding both the nature and the magnitude of change brought about as a result of its intervention. Overall, there is no doubt that there have been significant changes like increase in agricultural production, altered occupational pattern and sources of income, reduction in seasonal migration, use of more durable consumer goods, spread of education, improvement in transport and communication, development of infra-structure and general awakening amongst the people for better living conditions.

### 4.1 Impact of Development: Evaluation and Analysis

A noteworthy aspect of RWB's work at Devapur has been that, at certain intervals, it made a special effort to assess and evaluate the impact of its programmes and activities on the living condition in the villages, both in quantitative and qualitative terms. The object of these studies was to monitor, modify and, if necessary, re-formulate the programmes on a realistic basis in light of the experience gained from time to time. The following studies were undertaken:

- The first such study, perhaps a little too late, was made in the year 1959-60, by the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune in a very exhaustive and detailed manner, and therefore could be treated as a Bench Mark Survey.

- An evaluation study was undertaken in 1972-73, after about 20 years of the starting of the work, by Sh. Y.S. Pandit of the Department of Statistics & Economics, Tata Industries Ltd., Mumbai. The Report assessed the nature and magnitude of the progress made and also tried to analyze in broad terms, the factors responsible for the failure of some of the programmes.
- The final survey was done in 1986 by Sh. Y.S. Pandit to review and evaluate the overall progress made, including the achievements and failures, and to assess the total impact of developmental work on the lives of the people and the area, in comparison with the findings of the earlier studies.

However, it is problematic that the latest statistical information available on all aspects of development work, is only till 1986 and the RWB terminated its operations and withdrew from the area in the year 1989-90. Yet, we would certainly like to share our valuable experiences, conclusions and the lessons learnt by us. Comparison of the data available from the Bench Mark Survey (1959-60) to the second evaluation (1972-73) and onwards to the final survey (1986), yields a picture of ‘growth’ as well as ‘progress’ of the Project villages while, at the same time, raising serious developmental concerns.

#### **4.1.1. Growth of Income**

The conventional measure of the material well-being of the people is the net annual income. According to the final 1986 evaluation study, the total income of the Project villages shot up from Rs. 27.1 lakhs (1971-72) to Rs. 116.2 lakhs (1983-84) i.e. about 4.3-fold, and the growth from the Bench Mark survey (1959-60) was of the order of 14.3-fold from Rs. 8.1 lakhs to 116.2 lakhs - a staggering magnitude, even after making allowance for inflation (See Table 4.1).

This certainly provides a good indication of the direction of change that has taken place, in spite of several limitations and constraints, in arriving at income from different sources, with a fair



degree of accuracy. However, the growth of population was of the order of 127% which severely affected the increase in terms of per capita income

**Table 4.1**  
**Total Income\* of Villages: From Various Sources**  
**– Comparative Statement**

(Rs. in '000)

Source of Income	1959 – 60		1971 – 72		1983 – 84	
	Rs.	% of Total	Rs.	% of Total	Rs.	% of Total
1. Agriculture	355	44.1	1310	48.4	4066	35.0
2. Sheep/Goats	71	8.8	208	7.7	770	6.6
3. Milk/Ghee	62	7.7	137	5.0	603	5.2
4. Eggs/ Grains	26	3.2	92	3.4	469	4.0
5. Fish	02	0.2	10	0.4	109	0.9
6. Vegetables	-	-	03	0.1	11	0.1
7. Manure	05	0.6	23	0.8	169	1.5
8. Hiring of Bullocks & Bullock Carts	12	1.5	24	0.9	06	0.05
9. Wages	140	17.4	324	12.0	2128	18.3
10. Salaries	-	-	-	-	808	7.0
11. Engine Rent (Net)	-	-	26	1.0	23	0.2
12. Savings of Seasonal Migrants	22	2.8	196	7.2	1046	9.0
13. Remittances from Outside	27	3.4	156	5.8	725	6.2
14. Miscellaneous	83	10.3	196	7.3	691	5.95
<b>Total</b>	<b>805</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2705</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>11624</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\*At current prices.

The per capita income went up 6.31-fold from Rs. 124 to Rs. 783. The impact of RWB's Family Planning Programme, which was a late starter, is yet to become significant. Nevertheless, there was a perceptible transformation in the style and standard of living of the people. On the basis of the field surveys, the estimated population of the Project villages went up from 6,550 in 1959-60 to 14,838 in

1983-84, which is more than double (See Chapter 2, Table 2.3). A broad indication of the general improvement in the standard of living in the villages is observed from usage of durable consumer goods like cups and saucers, stoves, electric light, torches, bicycles, transistor radios, wrist watches, metallic utensils, sewing machines and such other goods (See Table 4.7). This is the visible impact of RWB's work associated with modernization. Today, most of the families have constructed their own *pucca* houses; have electric light connections, running water taps, T.V. sets, motor cycles, telephones, furniture, tractors, tempos, jeeps, and such other item of comfort

#### **4.1.2. Progress in Agriculture**

The agricultural development of the nine villages of the Devapur Project is reflected in several sectors. The total area under cultivation has recorded a sizeable increase. As a result of the concerted efforts made to conserve and utilize all the available water resources, the proportion of acreage under irrigation had gone up from mere 5.6% in 1959-60 to 13.8% in 1971-72 and again to 16.3% in 1983-84 (See Chapter 3, Table 3.1). One can imagine how much more it must have increased by now, after another 20 years, despite the fact that the over-all general underground water level of the area has been going down on account of the phenomenon of over-exploitation of water in several parts of the country.

The increase in the irrigated area does not take into account the substantial increase in the area yielding two or more crops in a year and supplementary watering to the rabi crops. Apart from a shift within the cereals group itself, the commercial crops like sugarcane, cotton, groundnut and onion are now being cultivated on an increasing scale (See Table 4.2). Of late, young farmers have shifted to horticultural crops like pomegranate (which require less water) and grapes on an intensive basis due to their higher yields and availability of market with remunerative prices.

Generally speaking, with the persistence of increasing trend, the share of commercial crops, in the total value of agricultural

production, increased from 12.3% in 1959-60 to 30.9% in 1983-84 (See Table 4.2). Presently, it must be much higher. The share of cereal crops declined from 81.8% to 67.2 % in 1983-84 and must have declined even further, by now (See Table 4.2). The area under commercial crops and their production, particularly crops like sugarcane, cotton and onion, have been varying much due to annual fluctuations and the uncertain pricing policies of the government.

**Table 4.2**  
**Changes in Cropping Pattern:**  
**Proportionate Crop-wise Share in Agricultural Production**

<b>Sr. No.</b>	<b>Crop</b>	<b>1950-60</b>	<b>1971-72</b>	<b>1983-84</b>
<b>A. Cereals</b>				
<b>1</b>	Bajara	30.8	17.2	15.8
<b>2</b>	Jawar	41.2	38.5	41.4
<b>3</b>	Wheat	5.8	6.6	7.6
<b>4</b>	Sal	3.3	3.1	0.6
<b>5</b>	Maize	0.7	4.3	1.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>81.8</b>	<b>69.7</b>	<b>67.2</b>
<b>B. Cash Crops</b>				
<b>1</b>	Sugarcane	1.6	2.7	8.8
<b>2</b>	Cotton	5.6	15.7	5.2
<b>3</b>	Groundnut	0.2	2.1	10.2
<b>4</b>	Onion	-	0.8	4.4
<b>5</b>	Chillies	4.9	3.2	2.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>24.5</b>	<b>30.9</b>
<b>C.</b>	<b>Others</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>1.9</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>A+B+C</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The farmers of the drought-prone area, who were earlier dependent on the vagaries of nature, are now dependent on traders' whims and the government pricing policies. There is no assured income for her/him from agriculture and allied activities, in contrast to the urban factory/office employee whose income invariably goes on increasing as per the Price Index. This is grave injustice against the rural people due to which disparities have been growing in India, which has dangerous implications for the future.

### 4.1.3. Seasonal Migration

The development programmes created substantial employment opportunities within the villages, particularly due to the irrigated labour-intensive cash crops.

**Table 4.3**  
**Number of Seasonal Out-Migrants According**  
**to Duration of Migration: 1983-84\***

(Figures in brackets indicate number of families reporting seasonal out-migrants.)

Village No. ** ↓	Duration of Migration (in months)										Total	% migrant to Total No. of families
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
1	-	-	-	-	-	2 (2)	-	2 (2)	-	-	4 (4)	10.0
2	-	-	-	2 (1)	1 (1)	14 (7)	-	-	-	-	17 (9)	32.1
3	1	-	-	4 (3)	5 (1)	17 (12)	-	-	-	2 (1)	29 (18)	36.0
4	-	-	3 (2)	-	14 (5)	73 (32)	-	-	-	-	90 (39)	55.7
5	-	-	-	-	-	-	9 (2)	-	-	-	9 (2)	10.0
6	-	-	-	69 (15)	28 (6)	37 (7)	-	-	-	-	134 (28)	62.2
7	-	-	-	-	-	1 (1)	-	-	-	-	1 (1)	2.2
8	-	-	-	-	-	6 (3)	1 (1)	-	-	-	7 (4)	16.0
9	-	-	2 (1)	27 (7)	28 (9)	37 (13)	-	-	-	-	94 (30)	60.0
<b>Total Persons</b>	1 (1)	0	5 (3)	102 (26)	76 (22)	187 (77)	10 (3)	2 (2)	0	2 (1)	385 (135)	36.1
<b>%***</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>26.5</b>	<b>19.7</b>	<b>48.6</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>100</b>	

\*Based on 16.6 % sample.

\*\*Numerical Notation for Project Villages – 1. Devapur; 2. Gangoti ; 3. Hingni; 4. Jambhulni; 5. Palasvade; 6. Panwan; 7. Pulkoti; 8. Shirtav; 9. Valai.

\*\*\* Proportion of total out-migrants in percentage.

Given the increasing population, these new employment opportunities have not been adequate for absorbing the entire surplus labour force in the area, all the year round. All types of unskilled earthen works in watershed development and roads have also reached its saturation. A large number of people continue to move out of the area in search of work and fodder for their animals, particularly during a drought year which occurs once every two or three years. However, the extent of seasonal migration, both in terms of size as well as duration, has gone down considerably. In spite of this, the value of surplus savings brought by the migrant labour and their share in the total income of the village has been much larger now (see Table 4.4). At the same time, with increasing education, one person at least from each family is now permanently employed outside the area, as teacher, clerk, driver, police, doctor, engineer or in some other job, does remit some income back home.

**Table 4.4**  
**Contribution of Migrants' Savings and**  
**Remittances to Village Income - Comparative Statement**  
 (Percentage of total village income)

Village No *↓	Migrants' Savings		Remittances		Total	
	1971-72	1983-84	1971-72	1983-84	1971-72	1983-84
<b>1</b>	2.8	0.1	8.8	4.1	<b>11.6</b>	<b>4.2</b>
<b>2</b>	4.5	9.1	5.5	9.7	<b>10.0</b>	<b>18.8</b>
<b>3</b>	3.9	25.9	3.3	3.3	<b>7.2</b>	<b>29.2</b>
<b>4</b>	8.1	19.2	2.9	3.7	<b>11.0</b>	<b>22.9</b>
<b>5</b>	2.3	0.3	2.7	-	<b>5.0</b>	<b>0.3</b>
<b>6</b>	15.6	0.9	1.2	-	<b>16.8</b>	<b>0.9</b>
<b>7</b>	1.8	0.2	20.7	18.9	<b>22.5</b>	<b>19.1</b>
<b>8</b>	1.5	1.6	3.2	11.6	<b>4.7</b>	<b>13.2</b>
<b>9</b>	16.6	19.9	1.0	7.0	<b>17.7</b>	<b>26.9</b>
<b>All Villages</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>15.2</b>

\*Numerical Notation for Project Villages – 1. Devapur; 2. Gangoti ; 3. Hingni; 4. Jambhulni; 5. Palasvade; 6. Panwan; 7. Pulkoti; 8. Shirtav; 9. Valai.

#### 4.1.4. Occupational Pattern

Since no comparative data are available for the earlier years, it may not be possible to present relative figures. However, based on the principle source of income, the whole picture appears to be interesting. Despite the fact that the basic character of the area is drought-prone and poor soil quality, the growth in the total agricultural production is quite substantial on account of massive water conservation work undertaken by RWB and government agencies under 'Employment Guarantee Scheme'. Agriculture is the main source of income for only about 50% of the families.

Employment in the Project villages and outside during the period of seasonal migration, mainly due to surrounding sugar factories, still remains the second most important occupation of the people with about 35% (See Table 4.5 & 4.6). Besides, the *Dhangar* (shepherd) community also migrates to the Konkan area in search of grazing lands and fodder for their animals.

**Table 4.5**  
**Occupational Pattern**

Sr. No.	Principle Source of Income	Proportion of Total Families (%)
1	Agriculture	49
2	Dairy Farming	02
3	Sheep Rearing	01
4	Wages	34
5	Salaries	05
6	Traditional Functions	02
7	Others	07

One of the reasons for this peculiar phenomenon could be the persistence of the joint-family system, allowing large size of families. This makes it possible for one brother to work in agriculture while the other goes out as a wage earner, in order to

enable the family to earn part of the total income in cash for daily needs, with the food grains continuing to come from agriculture. Nevertheless, the fact remains that about 50% of the people engaged in agriculture contribute only about 35% of the total income of the village in a drought-prone region (See Table 4.1).

This also underlines the crucial importance of focusing attention on a priority basis on the subsidiary agricultural activities for additional income generation for livelihood. RWB did try to concentrate on poultry, sheep and goat keeping along with dairy farming and fishing but not much headway could be made due to infrastructural limitations, such as lack of proper marketing facilities, good roads & communications, regular supply of power and green fodder all the year round.

**Table 4.6**  
**Classification of Families by Main Occupation: 1983-84**

*(Percentage)*

Village No. * → Occupation↓	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total %
<b>Agriculture</b>	55.0	28.6	50.0	67.2	35.0	44.5	56.5	52.0	30.0	<b>48.9</b>
<b>Dairy Farming</b>	5.0	3.6	2.0	-	5.0	-	2.2	-	-	<b>1.6</b>
<b>Wage earning</b>	25.0	46.4	44.0	22.9	25.0	44.5	19.6	48.0	42.0	<b>34.2</b>
<b>Service</b>	10.0	3.6	-	-	15.0	4.4	13.0	-	6.0	<b>5.1</b>
<b>Sheep Rearing</b>	-	3.5	-	-	15.0	-	-	-	-	<b>1.1</b>
<b>Traditional Functionaries</b>	-	-	-	2.8	5.0	4.4	2.2	-	6.0	<b>2.4</b>
<b>Others</b>	5.0	14.3	4.0	7.1	-	2.2	6.5	-	16.0	<b>6.7</b>
<b>Total families</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>374</b>

\*Numerical Notation for Project Villages – 1. Devapur; 2. Gangoti ; 3. Hingni; 4. Jambhulni; 5. Palasvade; 6. Panwan; 7. Pulkoti; 8. Shirtav; 9. Valai.

#### **4.1.5. Infrastructure Development**

In addition to attending to the immediate felt-needs of the people like drinking water, medical facilities, education etc., RWB also made heavy expenditure on infrastructural facilities over a period of the last several years. However, this being a long-term investment, involving a longer gestation period, the results are relatively slower and whose full benefit would be reaped in due course of time.

#### **4.1.6. Spread of Education**

By the time RWB withdrew its development programme from the Project villages in 1990, every village had a Pre-Primary Nursery (Balwadi or Anganwadi), Primary and Upper Primary School respectively up to Class IV and Class VII, High Schools up to Class X in four villages and one Junior College with Agriculture/Science facilities. The proportion of the school-going boys and girls has definitely shown improvement and the literacy rate has gone up in these villages (See Chapter III, Tables 3.6 to 3.8). A majority of the students passing SSC and HSC examinations were able to secure employment and thus contribute towards the total family income. Some of them were encouraged to go for university education by providing them suitable scholarships. Today, a large number of them are school teachers, college professors, agricultural officers, medical and veterinary doctors and engineers. A few enterprising young educated boys have started their own business in towns and cities. All of them are today contributing substantially to the family income and improvement in their standard of living in the form of constructing new houses in their respective villages and providing modern amenities. Villagers have realized the importance of education and each one of them is sending his/ her children to the schools.



## 4.2 Transformation: From Subsistence Migratory Living to Stability and Comfort

### 4.2.1 The Overall Picture

Bearing in mind that Devapur and other Project villages are situated in the worst drought-prone region of Maharashtra State, it can be stated without any exaggeration that RWB has brought about a perceptible change in the standard of living of the people.

When the RWB began its first pioneering rural development project in early 1950s, the Devapur area was more or less completely isolated from the rest of the world. There were only cart-tract roads connecting villages with Mhaswad, the nearest small market town. There were no medical facilities in the villages. Kerosene lantern was the only source of light in the night. Soon after sunset, the people went to bed after gulping whatever little was available as supper. The Primary School, with one teacher conducting four classes at a time, if it existed, functioned perfunctorily in the village chawadi of the temple. In spite of scanty rains, the flat terrain of basalt rock was always subject to floods and soil erosion, when it rained. The thin murum top soil yielded hardly any crop of *Bajra* worth its name. During summer months, even drinking water was scarce. No wonder, under these conditions, the villagers either lived a very precarious existence for survival or migrated to Konkan along with their family and animals in search of food, fodder and employment, leaving the village with the look of a barren desert.

But in the early 1950s, Sir Dorabji Tata Trust (SDTT) through its RWB reached out to these villages and did something like a 'miracle'. As a result of RWB's multifarious, comprehensive and integrated development and welfare work, the picture slowly but steadily started to change. The scientific and systematic approach of conservation of water and soil resulted in the improvement of underground water table in the first phase of Watershed Development viz., contour bunding, *nalla* bunding, percolation tanks and other measures. This was followed by its proper

utilization through digging of wells, old and new, lift irrigation in small groups and provision of diesel and electric pumpsets, making a significant difference to the quality of the lives of the people. The supply of potable drinking water, eradication of epidemics, availability of medical/ health facilities, increase in agricultural production and improvement in the per capita income, all together led them to better standard of living.

**Table 4.7**  
**Families Owning Durable Consumer Goods\***  
**(1983-84)**

*( In Numbers)*

<b>Village No.**→ Goods ↓</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Total Inter-view</b>	<b>Per Cent %</b>
Radio	14	02	14	19	07	12	11	09	13	08	<b>27.0</b>
Watch	22	13	28	34	12	24	21	09	23	01	<b>49.7</b>
Bicycle	20	04	21	27	11	25	28	17	22	-	<b>41.4</b>
Sewing machine	03	-	02	06	02	02	08	04	03	-	<b>8.0</b>
Iron cot	13	03	14	10	05	10	13	05	07	-	<b>21.4</b>
Furniture	02	01	03	02	01	-	04	02	02	-	<b>4.5</b>
Electric L.	24	02	06	15	05	03	20	06	04	-	<b>23.3</b>
Petromax	-	-	07	07	06	02	02	03	01	-	<b>7.5</b>
Lantern	21	08	22	38	08	26	33	12	11	-	<b>47.9</b>
Torch	13	07	22	40	12	17	21	10	12	-	<b>41.2</b>
Stove	22	03	11	27	04	06	29	11	05	-	<b>31.6</b>
Utensils	40	28	50	70	20	45	45	25	42	-	<b>97.6</b>
Cup-Saucers	37	24	47	70	20	44	45	24	42	-	<b>94.4</b>
Others	08	01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<b>2.4</b>
<b>Total interviewed</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>09</b>	<b>100</b>

\*Based on 16.6 % sample.

\*\*Numerical Notation for Project Villages – 1. Devapur; 2. Gangoti ; 3. Hingni; 4. Jambhulni; 5. Palasvade; 6. Panwan; 7. Pulkoti; 8. Shirtav; 9. Valai.

Quiet, continuous and persistent efforts by RWB, over a period of about 35 years, resulted in the substantial availability of cereals like *Jawar* and *Bajra*, the staple food of the local people, almost making them self-sufficient in food supply. With increased irrigation the cropping pattern of the Project Villages underwent a major change. Pockets of double crops, one of which was a cash crop like sugarcane, cotton, groundnut and onion, appeared on the horizon. This led to improvement in the purchasing power of the people, reflecting a definite change in their lifestyle and possession and usage of more and a variety of durable consumer goods like metallic utensils, kerosene stoves, cups and saucers, bicycles, wrist watches, torch lights, transistor radios, sewing machines, motor cycles, T.V., telephone, furniture, electric lights, running water, toilets etc. (See Table 4.7).

All these improvements made the general life of the rural people of a famine tract, a little more cheerful and satisfying. With the advent of electric power in the Project Villages, the streets and houses were lighted, flour mills saved the monotonous daily morning chore of the women-folk, power for irrigation water pumps shifted from diesel to electricity, Primary Schools were upgraded to High Schools with more Laboratory and Library facilities, thus improving the quality of education with more teachers and more students in class rooms. A few meritorious

students were encouraged to go in for university education with scholarships from RWB. Attention was paid to better roads and communication and the State Transport buses began moving in these villages too. The conditions of the weaker section also improved with the provision of better housing and livelihood activities like goat keeping and fishing.

However, the magnitude of development in this tract has to be assessed not so much on the basis of the growth of income, increase in agricultural production and usage of various types of durable goods or electric light in their homes but more in terms of reduction of the severity of regular droughts, which RWB tried to ensure. From this point of view, it may be observed that, though the

seasonal migration is bound to remain a structural feature of the economic and social life of this area for quite some time, the overall life in the Project Villages appears to be immensely more stable and secured now than it was when RWB first came on the scene. This is demonstrated by the relative ease with which the villages face the drought that continues to return frequently, mainly because of access to several other sources of alternative livelihood and more employment facilities in the surrounding area, apart from the regular financial remittances every month from the young educated having jobs in towns and cities. Today, almost every family can boast of having at least one or two educated youth in employment somewhere, contributing her/his share towards the family income and participating in improving the standard of living of family members by constructing a new and better house or buying a motor-cycle or a T.V. set and looking after family's overall health and education.

**Table 4.8**

**Classification of Family Members Permanently Living Outside the Village According to Education: 1983-84\***

Village No.**	A@	Level of education				E	Total Migr-ants	Educated Migr-ants %	F
		B	C	D	Total				
1	9	5	3	4	12	3	15	80.0	22.5
2	7	15	-	-	15	10	25	60.0	25.0
3	7	5	4	4	13	10	23	56.5	14.0
4	8	6	-	-	6	14	20	30.0	11.4
5	2	1	-	1	2	1	3	66.7	10.0
6	3	1	-	2	3	9	12	25.0	6.7
7	19	33	15	21	69	21	90	76.7	41.3
8	3	5	-	-	5	5	10	50.0	12.0
9	12	10	6	2	18	18	36	50.0	24.0
All Villages	70	81	28	34	143	91	234	61.1	18.7

\*Based on 16.6 % sample.

\*\*Numerical Notation for Project Villages – 1. Devapur; 2. Gangoti ; 3. Hingni; 4. Jambhulni; 5. Palasvade; 6. Panwan; 7. Pulkoti; 8. Shirtav; 9. Valai.

@ Alphabetical Notation for Column Titles – A. No. of Families Reporting Permanent Migrants; B. With Education up to SSC; C. With SSC & Technical Education; D. With Graduation & above; E. Illiterate; F. % of Families Reporting Permanent Migrants.

In short, it could be said without any hesitation that the general living conditions have immensely improved in all the Project Villages. Almost every family has a Bank account which could be relied upon in times of emergency. There is a Junior College at Devapur with Agriculture and Science faculty. There is an Artificial Insemination Centre at Devapur and more than 100 acres of land is under pomegranate cultivation, the fruits of which are exported to Gulf countries. Computer Literacy Training is becoming part of the Junior College at Devapur. The Pulkoti village has a Primary Health Centre with hospitalization facilities. S.T. buses are plying almost in all the villages every few hours and telephone connections are available in most of the houses<sup>34</sup>. Some of the village students, who were given scholarships for medical studies, have opened their own clinics in their villages. If anyone who had visited these villages in the early 1950s were to revisit today, she/he would certainly find an 'oasis' in the famine tract of Maharashtra.

#### **4.2.2 Investment in the Project**

It is rather difficult to put finger on one final figure. This is because the total investment made on various development programmes and welfare activities and its administration by RWB was made in collaboration with a large number of government and non-government agencies. Yet, it may be possible to give some indication about the total expenditure on development in the nine Project Villages, excluding the value of the substantial labour contributed voluntarily by the villagers themselves, would be over Rs. 1.30 crores. This is inclusive of the financial assistance procured from the government under various development schemes, the loans granted by the Banks to Co-operatives and the supplies of food under the 'Food for Work' Programme from the Catholic Relief Service (CRS). Between 70 to 75% of the total expenditure has been incurred on the development of infrastructure and productive

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<sup>34</sup> The author's reference to most of the houses having telephone connections must be for 1970s and 1980s when this was viewed as a status symbol, especially in erstwhile drought-prone villages. – Ed.

assets of permanent value. Considering the quantum of investment normally made by the NGOs in comparable situations, the RWB investment is definitely modest but utilized most economically and efficiently for the benefit of the people, in contrast to the manner in which funds are spent extravagantly both by the government and the vast NGO sector, with honourable exceptions notwithstanding.

#### **4.3 Dimensions of Change – I: A Socio-Political Perspective**

While assessing the nature and magnitude of change through rural development work, the dimensions of change need not be restricted only to increase in production and income; improvement in the standard of living; and provision of various types of infrastructural facilities to the villages. Instead, critical attention must be paid to certain invisible but subtle changes occurring in the socio-economic structure and the operating system of the rural society. The spectrum of social change must take into consideration the long-term changes as well.

Based on my in-depth study of what was happening to the nine villages for 35 years, I would contend that several invisible processes of change continue to occur in the structure of the rural society, even without a programme for social transformation. Slowly but certainly, the land holdings of a substantial majority of small and marginal farmers are surreptitiously grabbed or taken over either by a Sale-Deed or forcefully in connivance with the revenue officers through legal or illegal alterations in the land records. To make it possible, the big landlords and *Patils* of the village use their undue power and influence to take advantage of the dire and desperate socio-economic circumstances of the small and marginal farmers or even manipulate to create their family feuds. A substantial number of such small and marginal land holdings have been thus transferred in favour of the powerful elements. Consequently, the poor peasants<sup>35</sup> have, by and large, become

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<sup>35</sup>Mostly SCs/STs and poor OBCs, the latter also including a substantial section of Muslims, as documented by the Justice Sachar Committee Report (2006). – Ed.

landless labourers. No reliable statistical data are available but processes like these have been happening for long. A systematic study of such processes and their impact on the rural society is overdue. It would reveal how exploitation, including land alienation, of the oppressed castes and classes continues to be structurally instituted to date, despite the Constitutional mandate enshrined in Articles 14, 15(1), 21, 38(2) and 39(a, b) in general and 39A and 46 in particular for the protection of SCs, STs and other weaker sections from social injustice and exploitation.

The second phenomenon. Due to an incremental shift of the farmers from the farming sector, there is a steady increase in the number of the Absentee Agriculturist. The farmers, with a desire to make quick and easy money, have made investments in the non-farming occupations like trading and thus given up farming by sub-leasing their lands to others.

Both the above two processes are inter-dependant and supplementary to each other. Whether such a shift from Productive Occupation to Unproductive Occupation, the latter generally known as the Service or Business Sector, is desirable or not, may be a debatable question. Yet, there is no doubt whatsoever that a substantial expansion of the service sector, even in rural areas, is underway. This would certainly be at the cost of dismantling the agriculture sector, leading to steadily diminishing agricultural production - a notable shift from productive to unproductive sector. It is my guess that the service sector, which was hardly about 30% of the rural economy only 10-15 years ago<sup>36</sup>, has more than doubled by now due to neo-liberal policies under globalization. The aforesaid shift would necessarily lead to a rise in the rate of unemployment, disemployment and migration of the rural people to the urban areas in search of livelihood.

Money has become far more important in the present age of neo-liberal capitalism than ever before, irrespective of how one

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<sup>36</sup>In view of the book's manuscript being completed in 2006, the author's reference to "10-15 years ago" implies the period of 1991-96. – Ed.

makes it. The means of earning money, whether destructive or not, do not matter anymore. This is just an example, like the tip of an iceberg, of the basic changes rapidly taking place in the value system of the country, including the rural society. In villages where life was proverbially simple, honest and satisfying, it has become manipulative and dishonest. There are invisible and subtle ways in which the undercurrents are operating and the value framework is undergoing drastic changes which need to be urgently analysed by the social scientists. Ethical degeneration, in both the rural and urban societies, is a serious issue that can be overlooked only at the peril of the nation's future.

Generally, most of the evaluation studies and survey reports produced by the typical NGOs and the government agencies as well as the reports of the specialized professional evaluation organizations do not even attempt to unfold such aspects of rural development and social change. These aspects, in my humble view, are of great significance from the standpoint of long-term planning and their adverse impact on the rural society. More often than not, the issue of social change in favour of the oppressed and exploited masses in the rural society is deliberately and/or purposefully either underplayed or ignored altogether by the so-called 'professional' experts and their NGOs, presumably at the behest of the neo-liberal funding agencies.

The VOs, to be distinguished from NGOs<sup>37</sup>, engaged in rural development must try and comprehend such processes of the shifting character of various productive sectors, socio-economic undercurrents and cross-currents. These processes assume vital importance in the larger global context of the assault of 'Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization' on our overall economy and, therefore, on the entire society. Awareness, knowledge and understanding, informed by the political economy, are of critical importance for planning programmes for rural

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<sup>37</sup> See Introduction, Footnote 19, for comparison of VOs vs. NGOs.



development and social change. The rural workers and social scientists need to systematically investigate the dynamics of social change, with reference to such processes, by focusing on material and socio-cultural development impacting on the rural society.

In my view, the ownership pattern and actual control of the natural resources – land, water, forest, rivers, mines and oceans and all other immovable assets – does play a vital role in moulding and reforming the society. This issue must be critically engaged with. It is of no use doing patch work like increasing the output and production or improving the national income or per capita income within the prevailing unjust, unequal and exploitative structure of the society. *Hence, disparity and discrimination have become fundamental concerns today, with poverty being an inevitable outcome.*

Socialization and community control of the natural resources are among the most fundamental issues of India. Until and unless, these are resolved in a just manner, all our efforts at development, both urban and rural, are futile. Indeed, individual ownership of the natural resources blatantly violates Article 39(b) as well as Article 39(c) of the Constitution. What an individual with co-operation of the community produces may belong to her/him. However, the means of production given by the Mother Earth belong to all. *Hence, the natural wealth given by the Mother Earth must be utilized equitably for the good of the whole humanity.*

#### **4.4 Dimensions of Change – II: Post-Globalisation Changes**

We have earlier discussed how a substantial proportion of small and marginal farmers are forced to become landless labourers due to appropriation of their small land holdings, either out of economic necessity or under duress (See Section 4.3, 2nd Para). To be sure, there has been a reverse process as well. Some of the small and marginal farmers or even labourers have, out of their hard-earned income and limited savings, managed to purchase land and thus either expanded their land holdings or became small or

marginal farmers once again. It has been a two-way traffic but, on the whole, the appropriation of the land holdings of the small or marginal farmers, thereby making them landless labourers, has been the dominant phenomenon.

Similarly, broadly speaking, the trend amongst most of the farmers of becoming absentee farmers and getting engaged in trading or other service sector activities, is increasingly the preferred option. The preference for white collar jobs and not working with one's own hands in the farms has over the years become more of the norm than otherwise. In short, the culture of productive manual work, as Gandhi had advocated passionately, stands replaced by 'parasitical' work in the form of opening of shops and/or acting as middle-men in various transactions. Many of the farmers have purchased Tractors, Jeeps, Tempos or Auto-Rickshaws and are operating them on a hire basis in order to earn an additional income, besides farming.

**Table 4.9**  
**Distribution of Land Holdings: Comparative Statement**  
(in percentage)

No.	Size of Holdings (acres)	1971-72	1983-84
1.	Less or equal to 1.0	4.3	4.4
2.	1.1-2	5.1	7.5
3.	2.1-3	7.9	8.1
4.	3.1-4	5.1	6.7
5.	4.1-5	6.0	8.7
6.	5.1-10	27.8	27.2
7.	10.1-15	15.1	12.8
8.	15.1-20	11.7	6.4
9.	20.1-25	5.3	4.6
10.	25.1-30	4.1	4.4
11.	30.1-35	2.9	2.5
12.	35.1-40	1.2	1.5
13.	40.1-45	0.8	2.0
14.	45.1-50	0.7	0.9
15.	More than 50	2.1	2.3

\*Based on 16.6% sample.

**Table 4.10**  
**Number and Proportion of Landless Families: 1983-84\***

Village No.**	Total No. of Families	No. of landless Families	% of landless families
1	40	2	5.0
2	28	4	14.3
3	50	3	6.0
4	70	4	5.71
5	20	2	10.0
6	45	1	2.2
7	46	5	9.7
8	25	3	12.0
9	50	5	10.0
All Villages	374	29	7.8

\* Based on 16.6 % sample. \*\*See Table No. 4.11 for Numerical Notation.

**Table 4.11**  
**Production of Various Agricultural Crops:**  
**Their Relative Position: 1983-84**

(For each crop, value in Rs. '00 in the upper row & percentage in the lower row)

Village No.* → Crops ↓	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total
<b>Bajra</b>	277 14.0	35 8.7	177 14.8	323 17.4	59 4.7	307 29.1	206 17.0	9 1.2	226 45.3	1619 15.8
<b>Jowar</b>	585 29.4	161 40.5	547 45.7	1026 55.2	407 31.8	456 43.3	510 42.1	294 39.1	253 50.7	4239 41.4
<b>Wheat</b>	200 10.0	27 6.9	133 11.0	112 6.0	85 6.7	14 1.3	105 8.7	96 12.8	4 0.7	776 7.6
<b>Maize</b>	57 2.9	13 3.4	28 2.4	18 1.0	45 3.5	1 0.1	5 0.4	10 1.3	-	177 1.7
<b>Sal</b>	-	-	47 3.9	3 0.2	21 1.6	-	9 0.7	-	-	80 0.8
<b>Sugar-Cane</b>	394 19.8	22 5.5	32 2.7	-	252 19.7	26 2.5	23 1.9	148 19.6	2 0.4	899 8.8
<b>Cotton</b>	154 7.7	19 4.8	5 0.5	3 0.2	140 11.0	36 3.5	105 8.6	68 9.0	-	530 5.2
<b>Guon-ndnut</b>	167 8.4	100 25.1	31 2.6	306 16.5	198 15.5	133 12.6	92 7.6	10 1.3	11 2.3	1048 10.2
<b>Onion</b>	105 5.3	-	156 13.0	21 1.1	66 5.1	43 4.1	27 2.2	30 4.0	-	448 4.4
<b>Chillies</b>	49 2.5	20 4.9	35 2.9	27 1.5	2 0.2	29 2.7	38 3.1	39 5.1	-	239 2.3
<b>Gram</b>	-	-	5 0.4	12 0.7	-	-	86 7.1	-	-	103 1.0
<b>Others</b>	-	1 0.2	1 0.1	6 0.4	3 0.2	8 0.8	5 0.4	49 6.5	3 0.6	76 0.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>1988</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>1197</b>	<b>1857</b>	<b>1278</b>	<b>1053</b>	<b>1211</b>	<b>753</b>	<b>499</b>	<b>10234</b>

\*Numerical Notation for Project Villages – 1. Devapur; 2. Gangoti ; 3. Hingni; 4. Jambhulni; 5. Palasvade; 6. Panwan; 7. Pulkoti; 8. Shirtav; 9. Valai.

There has been a major change in the attitude toward farm work. When RWB started the Devapur Project, many of the farmers used to themselves cultivate sweet potatoes and/or carrots on small patches of their land and the agricultural labourers used to work for a major part of the day from early morning onwards, digging out sweet potatoes and/or carrots from under the soil. The tops/greens of both of these crops were invaluable green fodder for the animals and the root i.e. sweet potatoes and carrots were useful as nutritious food for human beings. The village society was entirely based on the barter system and there was no monetary transaction at all. The labourers used to get sweet potatoes or carrots as wages and the farmers used to get the green fodder for their animals. Now, this process has disappeared altogether. There are very few in the Project Villages who still grow the cereal crops which have been essentially replaced by the cash crops (See Table 4.12).

**Table 4.12**  
**Number and Proportion of Families Reporting**  
**Self-Sufficiency in Food Grains: 1983-84\***

No.	Villages	Total Number of Families	Families Reporting Self-Sufficiency	
			Number	Percentage
1	Devapur	40	21	52.5
2	Gangoti	28	06	21.4
3	Hingni	50	15	30.0
4	Jambhulni	70	36	51.4
5	Palasvade	20	10	50.0
6	Panwan	45	05	11.1
7	Pulkoti	46	24	52.2
8	Shirtav	25	09	36.0
9	Valai	50	04	8.0
<b>All Villages</b>		<b>374</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>34.7</b>

\* Based on 16.6 % sample

Another change we have been observing is on account of the large-scale expansion of education. Those among the younger generation, who got the opportunity to access school education and/or higher education, are presently employed either as school teachers, policemen, drivers, Govt. officers, doctors or engineers and, therefore, receive reasonably good salaries. Often, they use the money for improving the living standard of their families by constructing a new *pucca* modern type of house in the village or buying a motorcycle or some household consumable item. This is certainly a good thing from the standpoint of the rural families. However, the question arises: “Whither is our good old concept of the young people returning to their villages after completing their education in the cities (or even abroad) with a view to improve the living conditions of the community or the entire village.” Earlier, several young people, inspired by Gandhi, who left the city and moved to the villages, would have similar expectations from the educated youth of the present generation as well. But, the post-globalisation shift in the objective socio-economic conditions along with the retrogressive cultural impact of neoliberalism has left hardly any space for such expectations.

It may well be argued that there is nothing wrong in the young educated shifting to towns and cities and earning money by doing a job and, out of their savings, trying to improve the conditions of their respective families in the villages. This may be treated as a normal process, just as the urbanites go abroad for jobs and help the families by sending the required money<sup>38</sup>. Also, it is acknowledged that the villages are unable to provide work for the educated.

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<sup>38</sup>At the same time, in view of the shift from capitalism to neo-liberal economic order, we would do well by recalling Gandhi’s assertion that “India lives in her five lakh villages”. He contended passionately that the country can’t be liberated from inequality, poverty, backwardness, patriarchy and caste oppression without rejuvenating the villages and transforming them into economically, socio-politically and environmentally sustainable decentralised ‘Republics’. This is notwithstanding Dr. Ambedkar’s equally challenging and logical assertion that India’s villages are

Such changes, though subtle, are vital to the future direction and content of rural development. Yet, admittedly, these changes are neither measurable nor can be quantified as statistical data. Possibly, for this reason, these are generally not reflected in the economic surveys or even the census, being essentially ignored, knowingly or otherwise. Yet, these ought to be carefully noted and acknowledged, while making an assessment of the changes brought about due to development work in the rural areas.

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‘fortresses of caste oppression’. However, is this debate resolved by the neoliberal development model comprising (a) economic growth without ‘employment’; (b) alienation of the human being from productive manual work; (c) reduction of the wider social concern to the ‘self’ of narrow individualism, as evident from the city-based village youth supporting only their families, rather than having the Gandhian concern of rejuvenating the whole village; (d) urbanisation at the cost of nature, climate and sustainable social relations; and (e) regulation and governance of the human mind and its creativity digitally and, now much worse, through Artificial Intelligence and machine learning? If the debate is not resolved, which it isn’t, we will do well by not being carried away by the neo-liberal anti-humanity values and at least keeping the debate alive! – Ed.

## **Government Agencies vs. Voluntary Sector: Differences in Perceptions and Vision**

In the previous chapters, we have presented a systematic data-based account of the multi-dimensional rural development programme undertaken by the Rural Welfare Board (RWB) of the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust in a group of drought-prone nine villages over a period of 35 years (1955-1990) and its socio-economic impact. During this period, we often noted significant divergence between the Maharashtra State Government and the RWB, a Voluntary Organization (VO), with respect to the basic approach to Rural Development as well as the system of governance for the same. Some selected issues are elaborated here which might help in generalising the experience for similar contexts elsewhere in the country too.

1. There is a fundamental difference between the Government and the RWB in terms of the structure of governance and the administrative approach to Rural Development. The administrative hierarchy in the Government has a major adverse bearing upon the decision-making and implementation. In RWB, the field-level work is very intensive, with the highly trained professional staff placed directly at the village level, without any hierarchy. The presence of specialized professionals in a group of villages gives a human touch to the development work. This human touch at the village level is lacking in the government setup. This is why a voluntary organization like the RWB is far better placed than the government in connecting and identifying with

the people, involving them in local planning and seeking their co-operation in implementation of the programmes. The personal rapport of the RWB workers with the people also enables them to have a deeper understanding of the local resources, aspirations and the organisational potential at the village level. In addition, there is flexibility, motivation and efficiency in decision-making and implementation at all levels. This makes it possible for RWB to give individual attention to the participants' concern at the field level. The hierarchical structure of governance of the state government does not permit such functioning in either letter or spirit.

2. The provision for adequate, quick, timely and low-interest short-term and long-term credit on liberal scale and easy terms and conditions of repayment is a genuine felt-need of the small and marginal farmers as well as the other families living below the poverty line. Such a provision created by the RWB is crucial for productive purposes and for developing the required infra-structure in the villages. The Government planning in this regard is politically motivated and the terms and conditions for credit are unduly 'liberal' while also changing from time to time as per the exigencies to please and appease the people in order to procure their votes during elections. Consequently, a sizeable proportion of the credit made available to the farmers and other villagers on such concessional terms through the Co-operative Societies, Nationalized Banks, Government Departments or other financial institutions has either not been properly utilized; misused for wasteful unproductive purposes; or grabbed by the rich and well-to-do people for whom it is not meant for. Besides, the state government policies, more often than not, are of populist nature, writing off all the arrears of debt suddenly to meet the political needs of the party in power. To begin with, the credit is provided through '*Loan Melas*' blindly to everybody without following the government's own duly laid down procedure and terms and conditions and then it



is not recovered at the sweet will of the people in power. In the recent cases of suicides by the farmers and the poor due to heavy financial debt, the factors responsible include the Central and State Government's *ad-hoc* policies of providing 'over-liberalized' credit through 'Bank Melas' without proper guidance and monitoring, misuse of loan amount by the farmers for non-productive purposes and natural calamities like droughts, untimely rains or floods, apart from the rising input costs and unfavourable market price for the farm produce.

In contrast, a VO, operating in a particular area, tries to supervise and monitor the credit, given through the Co-operative Societies and Banks, in order to ensure that it is properly utilized for the purpose for which it is sanctioned and repaid in time as per the pre-scheduled instalments. The Voluntary Workers are, therefore, constantly confronted by the changing policies of the Government even as they insist on proper utilization and timely repayment of loans. This basic difference in the approach between the Government and the Voluntary Sector acts as a serious hurdle in the rural development work carried out by the voluntary workers. Instead of trying to mould the outlook of the farmers, which the voluntary worker do with great effort, the Government's policies and approach come in the way of successful implementation of the loan-dependent development schemes.

3. In the area of Family Planning, in line with the then prevailing government policy, after years of sustained educational and motivational work combined with the due incentives and disincentives, the voluntary workers prepared the eligible couple to come forward for Male Sterilization. This made it possible for the government to organise Vasectomy Camps with 100% success. However, the government suddenly changed its policy and started focusing only on Female Sterilisation i.e. Tubectomy Surgery. Thus, the entire voluntary endeavour in bringing about a progressive re-orientation of the

patriarchal mindset of the people in order to accept Male Sterilisation was wasted. This policy change of emphasis was indeed a great blow to the Family Planning Programme which slowed down considerably in voluntary sector's operational area too.

4. There is a basic difference in the Rural Development work undertaken in rural areas located near the towns and cities like Mumbai, Pune and Nasik and the villages located in remote backward and drought-prone areas like the Maan Taluka of Satara District. This is due to several favourable structural factors that facilitate Rural Development in the rural areas located in the vicinity of the cities and towns. The availability of the essential infrastructure (e.g. roads, electricity, transport, banking, communication, educational and health facilities etc.) and convenient access to market help catalyse Rural Development. For instance, the agricultural engineering and post-harvest processing units and refrigeration and cold storage facilities in the urban areas can help boost production of cash crops, vegetables and fruits, oil seeds, dairy products and poultry in the neighbouring villages, thereby generating employment too. However, since such facilities are lacking in the remote villages of Maan Taluka, the highest priority at the outset has to be given by the Government agency or the VOs to creation of the aforesaid basic infrastructure and other modern facilities.

All this obviously calls for mobilisation of vast resources time, money, energy and professional person-power before any concrete developmental programmes can be undertaken. Hence, rural development in such remote areas requires a much longer gestation period than in the rural areas near urban centres. In the remote areas, there is not much demand or, at best, only meagre demand for the surplus produce of the villages. The potential markets in towns are far away, thereby making the agricultural produce rather uncompetitive due to its

high transportation cost. The work of RWB-SDTT in Maan Taluka must be assessed and evaluated taking into consideration all such unfavourable factors, as elaborated above. This is why the funded NGOs, vying for quick results and publicity, tend to select the villages which have convenient access from the operational standpoint. In this perspective, the decision of the RWB-SDTT in 1952 (See Chapter 1) to deliberately and purposefully select the remote drought-prone impoverished villages of the Maan Taluka for their maiden Rural Development initiative places the organisation in the genre of a 'Voluntary Organisation' with a mission of its own, to be distinguished from both the Government Agencies as well as the NGOs<sup>39</sup>.

5. One of the greatest constraints which a Voluntary Organization has to face in a drought-prone impoverished area like the nine villages of the Maan Taluka is the seasonal migration of the people both in search of livelihood for themselves and water and fodder for the survival of their animals like cattle and sheep. In short, it is a struggle for survival for both the human beings and the animals. Due to such a seasonal migration, it is not only the local economy which is adversely affected but it affects the health and education of men, women and children as well. Normally, migration is not viewed as a favourable phenomenon in the rural development discourse but, for the drought-prone areas, the seasonal migration is not a negative

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<sup>39</sup>Notably, the decision by SDTT to start the Devapur Project was taken in 1952 (See Chapter 1) when both the TATAs and the Birla House were carrying the tag of being the leading edge of the 'National Bourgeoisie' which gave the 'Bombay Plan' as the guiding framework for independent India's economic policy (See Introduction). The liberal values of capitalism reflected in this decision, as would be expected, were steadily eroded with the changing political economy. In the post-globalisation India, SDTT's decisions were evidently being determined instead by neo-liberal capitalism driven by the finance capital, implying that the SDTT in 1990s would not be the same as it was in the early 1950s. Empirical evidence for this neo-liberal metamorphosis of SDTT is also available (See Introduction, Footnote 19 to be read along with Footnotes 22 & 26). – Ed.

factor but a much-needed positive one. This is because it helps the migrant families not only to survive with their animals but it also helps them earn some additional income, which they bring back home as surplus after 6 months of hard life. Hence, given my 35-year experience in the area. I have come to the conclusion that migration under such circumstances is a good thing for the people, a good source for additional income on which they can survive after returning to their own village. Undoubtedly, the education of the children and health of the family may suffer a setback but for them there is no other option. One has to accept the situation as it is and make the best use of it unless the government steps in with a resolve to transform the political economy of the area, as mandated by the Constitution.

### **Some Salient Features of RWB-SDTT**

Some of the salient features of the rural development work undertaken by RWB-SDTT which distinguish it from the State Government's approach are briefly discussed below

The Specialist Team of qualified professionals working under a Coordinator (i.e. the author himself – Ed.) stayed in and functioned from the Project's nine villages itself. This helped in establishing a close rapport with the villagers and also in properly understanding their core problems. Therefore, the programme planning could be undertaken with the villagers' participation. This identification with the people provided the essential basis for building mutual confidence with RWB's field workers.

The Specialist Team enjoyed full freedom to plan programmes with the cooperation of the local people, thereby enabling them to utilize their expert knowledge properly while also learning from the people about their genuine difficulties and problems. There was minimum paper work and no 'red tape' either the focus being on the ground-level field work and concrete results. The Coordinator submitted an Annual Progress Report along with a Budget to the

RWB. The Board in turn would sanction the Annual Budget, as per its framework. There were no financial restrictions in planning and implementing the programmes. However, this full freedom itself generated a great sense of heavy responsibility on the team members.

The Coordinator with the help of the team members created a cadre of Gram Sevaks at the village level who also acted as a Liaison or link between the field workers and the villagers. The Gram Sevaks worked on an honorary basis. They were provided 'practical field work training' by organizing camps from time to time for about a week or a fortnight. A monthly meeting of these Gram Sevaks was held regularly for feedback and follow up.

As per the original self-adopted guideline, SDTT did not create any demonstration farm owned by the Trust in the Project Villages (See Chapter 1). Demonstrations were organized on new methods, techniques, seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, on the farms of the farmers themselves. One of the main principles followed by the SDTT was not to own any movable or immovable property like land or building in the Project Villages. This principle was invaluable in creating cordial relations with the people and gaining their full confidence.

Normally, in the Government setup, the last link in the chain of administration and execution is generally a Gram Sevak or a Talati. In our view, both the Gram Sevak and the Talati constitute the weakest link of the system of governance since they neither share the Project's vision nor have any worthwhile perception of the work involved, required knowledge, grass-roots experience or freedom to take decision on their own. On the other hand, in the RWB-SDTT's Project, the last link was purposefully and consciously conceived as being fairly strong and powerful by asking the specialists to stay and work at the village-level itself and take all important decisions in consultation with the villagers. Thus, an effort was sincerely made to plan from below and also implement the plans and

programmes at the field level with participation of the villagers themselves. In contrast, in the Government setup, either the Collector/CEO or the BDO at the Taluka level takes the decisions and instructs the Gram Sevak or Talati to implement them, neither of the two being empowered to take any initiative on their part. Thus, in the Government structure, the person who has grass-roots perception of the local conditions and acquaintance with the villagers, has no decision-making power while the person, who is empowered to take decision has no feeling for the village dynamics. This divergence in the system of governance of Rural Development programmes adopted by the RWB-SDTT and the Government is also expectedly reflected in both the content and the direction of development undertaken respectively by a Voluntary Organisation and a Government agency. Hence, the inevitable question, “Whither the destiny of India’s villages?”

## RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN RETROSPECT

If we closely observe the pattern of Rural Development since independence in chronological order we would find that there is a gradual but remarkable change in the ideology of rural development. At the time of independence, both pre- and post- periods, rural development work began as idealism to serve the rural people with a missionary zeal. In due course of time, it changed into romanticism and then into a romantic venture, followed by professionalism. Presently, it has become a profitable business - a commercial activity, an International Trade & Multi-national enterprise with the support of UN Agencies, World Bank and International Funding Agencies, an opportunity to exploit the present situation under the pretext of 'Development', with the support of the western capitalist interests who want the world divided into two parts, namely, Rich and Poor, Developed and Un-developed.

### Urban Perceptions vs. Rural Problems

Generally speaking, the Rural Development programmes are formulated and implemented by the sponsoring/promoting Governmental or Non-Governmental Agencies belonging to the urban educated middle-class, either professionals or motivated with idealism for doing some 'good' to the villagers. Hence, normally they have an urban background and a fixed mind-set, with a 'Social Work' approach of good intentions but lacking knowledge of the genuine problems and the felt-needs of the rural impoverished people. Nor are they aware of the priorities of the people suffering from poverty and the conditions prevailing in the villages. With

their pre-conceived notions - a typically urban perception of the rural problems - they formulate rural programmes on the basis of their fixed mindset. Most of the VOs/NGOs begin their work based upon the academic qualifications and training they have. For example, the doctors would start with medical work by opening a Dispensary or a Hospital. If one has an educational background, she/he would start with opening a school. An engineer may begin with some construction activity.

Most of these educated young people, who start rural work through a VO/NGO have a sensitive but also impulsive urban mind. Therefore, when they come across a villager suffering from some pain or sickness, which normally is likely to be the case due to poverty or malnutrition, they begin to pity them and try to provide some immediate temporary help - a humanitarian response indeed but not based on objective reality.

Generally, the approach to rural work is not scientific and there is no effort to study the problems of the villagers in depth and try to understand the genuine basic problems based on their felt-needs. Our Indian approach of charity, knowingly or unknowingly, plays a major role in the formulation of the programmes. Even if some sort of a token attempt is made by some exceptional VO/NGO to first study the conditions of the people, generally the feedback they procure is more from the landed gentry and other well-to-do in the village, not from the exploited and impoverished sections of the rural society. Thus, the programme design is also biased in favour of the upper class/caste people. Hence, the usual set of programmes like education, health, housing, roads etc are undertaken, which are more of a social orientation.

In reality, however, the core problems of the rural people are more of an economic nature. They want livelihood or income generation programmes which could provide them with work/employment and a dignified remuneration on a continued regular basis. This is rather difficult to organize and implement, requiring substantial funds, infrastructure, raw material/ marketing and such other support.



The normal tendency is, therefore, to spend money/ funds on relief or providing some immediate facility or amenity to the villagers. The villagers are also quite clever, in the sense that they will never refuse the offer of any free material help while allowing the VO/NGO workers to go on doing whatever is preferred by them. This is the normal human tendency. This has been the widely accepted practice of the Government agencies as well as the VOs/NGOs since independence. The RWB-SDTT also is no exception to this rule either. The same approach was adopted at least in the beginning. The realization came later on, when the initial enthusiasm and energies had been wasted on programmes which have low priority, being easy to implement but having greater publicity value.

In the final analysis, it must be appreciated and internalized by all concerned - the rulers and the planners, the social workers and the VOs/NGOs - that there is a wide divergence between the 'Rural Approach to the Rural Problems' and the 'Urban Approach to the Rural Problems'<sup>40</sup>. The very premise of the ways and means the rural people want to adopt to resolve their own basic problems is different from those the urban people consider as being appropriate. To state it rather crudely, the urban people want the rural people to leave the village and migrate to the cities and towns, so that they can get cheap labour force which they need, in ample measure, to run their factories, trade, business services, homes and families. The urban people are apparently not interested in the rural people staying back in their villages and leading a comfortable life with their families. Nor do they want agriculture and allied economic activities to develop and flourish. They would rather have the rural people come to cities and stay in slums as their cheap slaves. Howsoever much the elite and the middle class social workers may

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<sup>40</sup>This formulation needs to be enriched by bringing in the class, caste and patriarchal dimensions of the society. Otherwise, even the 'Rural Approach' may represent the vested interest of the landlords or local traders, not the landless labourer or the small and the marginal farmers. – Ed.

talk about rural development and the welfare of the rural people, there is no genuine truth in it.

In the same vein, the educated rural people do not want to stay back in the villages and work hard with the soil of the Mother Earth. Instead, they, too, want to have white-collar parasitic jobs in the cities, even if this implies living in filthy slums. In this sense, the rural people have also lost their earlier values. The times have drastically changed. There is hardly any genuine nationalism or patriotism<sup>41</sup> left amongst our people in sharp contrast to the ambience before or soon after independence that inspired the youth to serve the society. Broadly speaking, we want to use every opportunity to exploit the country for our selfish interest, with honourable exceptions notwithstanding. This bitter truth, by and large, marks our present society, irrespective of whether we are willing to accept it or not.

### **Self-Critique: Engaging with Objective Reality**

In this background, it must be honestly acknowledged that, in the initial years, the RWB-SDTT also working on the flawed premises, followed the same path and, knowingly or un-knowingly, made the same mistakes which are typical of the community development programmes prescribed in the Government Manuals or NGO guidelines. These programmes, seemingly comprehensive and integrated, lack the perspective of social transformation by building a society based on equality and social justice. Consequently, misconceived rural development programmes and welfare activities gave a totally wrong direction to the whole Project from its inception. Although, RWB did undertake an extensive programme of Water Conservation through universal contour-bunding work in

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<sup>41</sup> Given the legacy of the freedom struggle which the author represents, ideas like 'nationalism' or 'patriotism' are not reduced to being abstract notions which can be exploited on 26<sup>th</sup> January or 15<sup>th</sup> August each year for jingoistic minority bashing. In contrast, these have concrete manifestations like working for village development, teaching children, volunteering as helpers in hospitals, planting trees, organizing libraries and cultural programmes, cleaning your locality and so on.

the nine villages, it somehow failed to realize the utmost vital importance of water for the local people. Undoubtedly, RWB also made a belated attempt to focus its energies on the conservation, utilization and management of water, but the focus on it was not optimum. The required genuine focus on water as the prime problem of the nine villages was lacking.

To be fair, it may be recorded that serious restrictions, limitations and constraints operated on the RWB-SDTT because of the inherent unfavourable nature of the top soil, underground black rock, the Deccan Basalt, and the most uncertain and irregular rainfall of the area. Therefore, it must be admitted that even today, we have not been able to resolve the problem of water both for drinking/domestic or irrigation purposes, on a sustainable basis. Unless, through heavy capital investment or otherwise, we are able to bring the required quantity of water from some external source to the flat and high plateau of the Maan Taluka, it would not be possible to sustainably solve the problem. This is not an easy job at all. It calls for tremendous Political Will on the part of the rulers and the local people. There is no doubt that if this problem of water scarcity is resolved satisfactorily, then most of the other problems of the Maan Taluka would also become easier to solve. Unfortunately, we did not have this crucial realization in 1950s and 1960s when we initiated the pioneering rural development project. The then political rulers, too, failed to take long-term steps with firm commitment; only lip service was provided. Yet, it would be entirely fair to accord the full credit to the RWB-SDTT for whatever evidence of development we see today in the nine villages (See Chapters 3 & 4 for details).

To reiterate, Rural Development must be based on the genuine felt-needs of the villagers whose highest priority in the nine villages, as we belatedly found out, was for economic programmes, with the social programmes having relatively low priority. What the villagers were looking for was neither School or Dispensary nor a good House. What they really wanted was some skill, assets or

means of production, which could ensure for them livelihood with dignity and a regular income all the year round. This is their primary need whose critical significance we urban-oriented social workers are unable to fathom. Clothing, housing, education, health and leisure have a second order priority.

Let us take a concrete example of how we made blunders, failing to correctly assess the real needs of the village people due to our urban background, education and mindset. When we started our work in the nine villages in the early 1950s, we, in our sheer ignorance or naiveté, thought that these villagers, doing hard manual labour for the whole day, must have some common place for recreation and relaxation. Based on this assumption, the RWB constructed a huge Community Recreation Centre at one of the central villages namely, Pulkoti, with multifarious recreation facilities like (a) an open air theatre; (b) a gymnasium; (c) an indoor game room; and (d) a library-cum-reading room. Accordingly, the RWB made a substantial investment on this huge building which further needed our sustained creative resources and energy to make it an ideal show-piece. However, within a short period, we realized that the villagers would use this facility rarely, though they appreciated and praised it. As a result, the recreation centre soon became an idle place since the villagers had no use for it at all. They, including the women, were instead far more interested in finding employment and accessing new sources of livelihood and income generation.

Similarly, when we started a Medical Centre for these villages, with all the modern facilities, equipment and qualified staff, the villagers did appreciate the activities of the Centre but this, too, was not their felt-need at all. They were used to getting treatment through the traditional methods. Also, they would take the medicines given by the doctor but very few consumed it for the entire prescribed course, throwing away the medicines mid-course. Normally, they would ask the doctor to give them an injection for immediate relief, instead of the drugs. The drugs had to be

necessarily consumed for a certain minimum number of days which was not a feasible proposition since they were all keen to return to their work for wages. They had no time to wait because it was a critical question of their bread and butter. If they do not go for work for one or two days, the whole family would go hungry. They had no other alternative means for survival.

The Family Planning Programme, started by the RWB at quite an early stage of the Devapur Project, had the lowest priority for the villagers. Ironically, for them, more children meant more hands to work and more income. Children are their economic assets. They start earning very early in their age, which is why they do not send their children to the school also. We tried to motivate them and talked to them about the larger national problem of our huge and increasing population and limited resources of the country. However, they contend that “for us, this is our family problem and if you are not concerned about our family and its welfare, why should we concerned about the country? Why should we resort to the small family norm? If our family is small, our family income also will be less. How can then we survive? Children and more children are our assets. Since you do not give us other assets or means of production like land, water, forest etc, we have no other option but to use our children as our assets, so more children means more income for us. Population problem may be your problem, but it is not our problem. On the contrary it is beneficial to us. Who will look after our goats and animals? Who will look after our little siblings, when my wife goes for work? How can I send my children to the school? Schools are not meant for us.”

During the long period of its association with the Devapur Project, the programmes and activities of the RWB covered a wide range - from the development of some of the basic natural resources like land and water to social welfare activities like medical relief and education. In its eagerness to improve the living conditions in the villages, it tried out all types of ideas, without making any proper assessment of the felt-needs of the people and without

deciding about the priorities. The RWB attempted to influence the life of the villagers from all the angles - economic, social and cultural. It undertook a large number of programmes and activities simultaneously at one time, without realizing its own limitations in terms of person-power and other material resources. All this was done just because the local people wanted us to do, with the objective of winning their confidence. But, in doing so, we failed to provide the required leadership while implementing such rural development programmes. In its desire to make programmes 'Comprehensive and integrated' as is generally done, the RWB, in its initial enthusiasm and ignorance, tried to undertake too many programmes and left them halfway due to certain basic difficulties it encountered. Poultry Farming for individual villages as an income-generating livelihood activity and the Sisal Fibre Processing Unit on a co-operative basis, without realizing the inherent problems of organized marketing, could be cited as two telling examples of failure.

Whether this approach was right or wrong, it is difficult to say at this stage but in retrospect it is certain that the RWB unnecessarily tried to do too many things, without a proper study and planning. It would have been much wiser to focus attention on a few priority programmes, rather than dissipating its resources and energy on several programmes and activities. A striking example of this mistake was that all the building and construction activities of the Project like the school building, dispensary, staff quarters and community centre were carried out by the specialist field workers themselves departmentally instead of giving all the construction activities to a building contractor on a contract basis. Thus, the specialized professional skill and training of the field workers was wasted in supervising various construction activities, for which they were not trained. Unfortunately this realization came to the RWB and its field workers rather very late, by which time the initial enthusiasm was almost eroded and the initial co-operation and participation of the villagers was also on a declining graph namely,

during the second phase of the 35-year period. The villagers, too, by this time had become quite clever or shrewd. In addition, due to external influence and also the emergence of political forces on account of the advent of the Panchayati Raj, the finer human qualities of the simple and forthright villagers, the fellow-feeling of the families and the village community and desire to work hard in a sincere and honest manner, gradually and steadily started to disappear. The earlier village unity was missing. Various types of groupism at all levels, based on selfish narrow considerations started becoming active and powerful while also placing obstacles or hurdles in the developmental process.

### **Development and Its Dilemma: The Way Forward**

It has already been pointed out that the RWB programme in the Devapur Project was planned and implemented entirely by its field workers, living in the villages and working with the co-operation of the villagers (See Chapter 5). Although their number was relatively small, they were directly involved in its execution. Some of the major programmes were excavation and construction of drinking water wells and construction of a school building in each of the nine villages, plantation of agave and fruit trees, development and organization of poultry, provision of medical facilities, the establishment of a Cattle Breeding Centre and Sisal Fibre Centre on a co-operative basis.

It is certain that large financial investment, big buildings and increased production and income alone do not add up to Rural Development. The human being behind this developmental process has the crucial role. How do we shape her/his mindset and outlook toward life, family and the larger community is of far greater importance than mere material progress. Financial resources of course are required for basic infra-structural development but liberal and easy availability of monetary resources is likely to have a negative impact on the human being on whom the human society fundamentally depends. Notably, we would like to caution that, in the name of people's co-operation and participation, it would

neither be a pragmatic nor a morally correct stance to go along whatever the people say or want. Instead, it is our duty to provide a mature leadership in all aspects for which wisdom and experience are crucial.

The ultimate larger goal of the development programme, particularly in the remote and deprived rural/ tribal areas, must be elimination of (a) inequality; (b) exploitation and oppression; and (c) building a new society based on equality and justice in the social, economic, political and cultural spheres. If we apply these parameters to the rural development work undertaken by the RWB in the nine villages, in my humble opinion, it has certainly not enabled the people to move in this direction. The rural development work has, in general, increased the agricultural production and other income too but only of a small section of society. The larger majority of the oppressed sections have remained where they were before the Devapur Project. These sections of society have to still struggle for their bare survival. The villages may have been provided with more and better facilities and amenities to make life easier and comfortable for a small minority. The poverty of the community might have been reduced marginally and a few of the poor families may be enjoying a better life in terms of food, shelter, clothing, education and health but a major share of all these gains have been cornered by a small section of the society namely, the upper classes/castes. In short, the basic structure and system of the society has not changed, with inequality and injustice still persisting!

As far as the impact of our work on the people's mindset, outlook and values is concerned, to the best of my knowledge, there has been essentially no such positive transformation. On the contrary, with improvement in the economic and the social conditions of the people, the selfishness and narrow mindedness has generally increased. The people have become more self-centred than what they were before the Project. Earlier, when we started the rural development work, the people were at least, in some measure,



thinking beyond the self and willing to make provision for others in the village despite being impoverished. Presently, the village people, by and large, do not seem to care about the other fellow beings. Further, in order to achieve one's self-interest, the people have started using foul means. Formerly, there was some social fear and the people were rather reluctant to put the wrong foot forward. However, generally speaking, now the people pursue their personal and, at best, only their family's material development, at any cost whatsoever while also cheating and/or exploiting others for one's narrow self-interest.

Thus, as a result of rural development work, neither has the socio-economic system undergone progressive transformation nor has the human beings changed for better. On the contrary, both the system as well as the people have degenerated, degraded and deteriorated. The earlier finer qualities of the human beings have almost disappeared. There is hardly any fellow feeling left. The people have become more and more individualistic. Earlier, when we started working in the villages, there was extreme poverty but the people had more humane attributes, being concerned about their neighbours and the community. Today, the situation stands reversed. The phase of extreme poverty is almost over in the Project Villages and the people have more of everything but the human qualities are diminishing with the people becoming more crooked and manipulative. There was indeed material development but no social transformation for a more equitable and socially just society.

I would like to submit that Development and Social Transformation are two different processes. Development is relatively easier while transformation is far more difficult. Change in society demands certain amount of radicalism, commitment and political will. If we are aiming at social change for creating a New Society, development by only spending money is not enough; indeed, it can be counter-productive. It needs radical change in the socio-economic structure of the society through mass movements. What we have done at Devapur and what most of the NGOs (to be

distinguished from Voluntary Organisations: *See* Introduction, Footnote 19 to be read with Chapter 7, Footnote 42) also do is only Functional Development, within the existing social structure. We have not been able to bring about any fundamental changes in the prevailing socio-economic framework, though there was definitely significant material progress as reflected in the life style and the standard of living of a small minority. Structural changes imply change in the ownership pattern of the society's Natural Resources and also the means of production and wealth.

Clearly, our development work has not contributed to the transformation of the human being or the society. On the contrary, with material progress and more money in their hands, all types of vices have increased. The increased income goes in spending on police cases and court cases. We thought that education might help to nurture human attributes among them and their attitudes and outlook as well. But the 35-year long experiment of rural development proved that we were wrong in our initial premise. Instead of improving the humane attributes, education dragged them in the reverse direction since it is used for advancing one's selfish interest, rather than for the well-being of the community or the society. Therefore, education is not the solution for structural change in the society unless the present education system is radically transformed in consonance with the Constitutional imperatives (However, for an alternative, read Albert Einstein's views on transformative education in the Introduction, p. 40-41).

## THE ROLE OF VO<sup>s</sup> vs. NGO<sup>s</sup><sup>42</sup> IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

On the basis of my grass-roots experience, I can say that the role of Voluntary Organizations (VOs) in the development work is severely restricted and subject to various limitations. Such organisations can play the role of only Functional Development, within the existing structure of the society and the prevailing socio-economic system defined by the hegemony of class, caste, creed and patriarchy. They cannot transform the given socio-economic and political structure. A VO can certainly help the poor marginally in their welfare. However, it cannot change the ownership pattern of the land and other natural resources in the country. Hence, even after carrying out Functional Development work for prolonged periods, the social structure and the socio-economic and the political system remain unchanged.

**Secondly**, the VO sector may improve the social and economic conditions of the people to a certain extent through its development programme. Yet, it cannot bring about any fundamental change in the values, attitudes and behaviour of the people. This realisation is painful to a person like me who committed himself for 35 years to

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<sup>42</sup>As elaborated in the Introduction (see Footnote 19 for detailed explanation), the term NGO shall not be used here henceforth unless required by the economic and political context. The author of the book is clearly referring to the Voluntary Organisations (VOs), as a legacy of the Freedom Struggle. Unlike NGO, a Voluntary Organisation (VO) has a mission of its own and is either an organic part of a social movement or rooted in a group dedicated to a socio-political cause. In contrast, NGO is a phenomenon of neo-liberal capitalism, conceived and designed to promote the interest of the neo-liberal economic order, even if it is deleterious to our society and the country. – Ed.

the cause of uplifting the quality of life of the people in nine villages.

**Thirdly**, at my personal level, I must honestly admit that the courses for professional social workers or the so-called training given in Applied Social Sciences, both at the national as well as the international level, is not useful for the grass-roots work in the rural areas. Whatever is taught at such institutions is alienated from the reality and that, too, borrowed from the western countries. Hence, it does not serve any practical purpose. We have to un-learn first what we learn from the textbooks and then to re-learn from the people by living and working with them. This is the core lesson drawn from the dynamics of the rural society. This realisation leads us to question the very role such elite high-profile institutions have been playing at public cost since independence.

**Fourthly**, we must also keep in mind that the national, international and global conditions are rapidly undergoing change. The people's mindset is also changing. Hence, we must learn to move with the times. Our experience should not be taken as sacrosanct; instead, what is crucial is to understand the spirit behind it. The social dynamics of the rural society is continuously changing under the influence of industrialization, urbanization, materialism, consumerism and also introduction of scientific and technological changes<sup>43</sup>. Therefore, in the field of rural development, attempts must invariably be made to evolve new approaches and adopt innovative ideas with a fresh mind to engage with the problems the rural society. At the same time, the focus on the central goal of bringing about equitable, just and sustainable development and a change based on ethical values must in no case be compromised.

**Fifthly**, our rural development problems are linked to the global policies of the IMF, World Bank and WTO, operating under

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<sup>43</sup>See Introduction, Footnote 20 which refers to the dangerous anti-civilisational implications of digitalisation of human society, a technological development which was just taking roots in the rural areas when the author was about to complete his manuscript in 2006. Otherwise, the author would have certainly made a reference to this phenomenon as well. – Ed.

the control of USA. Unless the VOs of the country come together, we shall not be able to make any dent in their stranglehold over the poor and developing countries like ours. Hence, let each and every VO undergo a process of self-introspection and explore ways and means to come together to give a common united fight to the forces of neo-liberal capitalism for the sake of the majority of our marginalized people. If this united struggle is not waged, the *status-quo* will continue.

**Finally**, in our country, we have a long tradition of a large number of well-intentioned VOs doing good work but typically functioning in isolation of each other. Each VO is keen to carry forward one's own programme independently and demonstrate their superiority over others. Apparently, it is each VO's organisational ego that prevents them from coming together. It is likely that, along with the organisational ego, the difference at ideological or strategic level may also come in the way of collective action. The truth may lie somewhere in between. Our ultimate destination presumably may be the same but, instead of walking together on a common path, we all end up going in different, if not even contradictory, directions. Be as it may, a way out of this suicidal trap must be found on a priority basis.

In the absence of united and concerted effort, the VOs have not been able to make any substantive impact at the macro-level on the national policies or politics. I would, therefore, make an earnest appeal to all the VOs and their various federations and alliances to unite and come together under one single banner, with firm commitment to constitute a common Non-party Political Forum. Advocacy on certain common causes by the VOs from such a common platform could have a long-lasting impact on at least some of the basic issues. Such a Non-party Political Forum could persuade or compel the Government to formulate and implement developmental policies in consonance with the Constitution. Let us learn to walk together for a common purpose. The crying need of the hour is to evolve a common radical programme of socio-economic transformation through a broad-based all-India common Non-party Political Forum.

## 8

### LESSONS TO LEARN

In the earlier chapters, I have presented in detail the information and the relevant data with respect to the various Rural Development Programmes undertaken in the Devapur Project, including their achievements and failure, problems and difficulties encountered and the conclusions arrived at by me and our field workers collectively. Based upon our performance and experience, I have discussed the mistakes committed by us in planning programmes and identifying our priorities. Further, I have also attempted to show how the material and socio-economic conditions of the people of the nine villages, selected by us, changed and improved substantially.

In retrospect, I would try and present our views, based upon the sustained experience of 35 years at the grass-roots level, living and working with the village people in a remote, economically backward and drought-prone neglected area. The broad conclusions drawn by us in the perspective of human development of the rural society, not just material development, shall also be placed here for consideration of the vast Voluntary Organisation (VO) sector operating across the country. One may agree or disagree and accept or reject these conclusions but it is our sincere duty to share with the readers our free, frank and honest views and experiences of rural development along with the objective assessment of our work as elaborated in the earlier chapters. This analysis is particularly addressed to the rural workers who are presently engaged in rural development and also those from the new generation who are planning to get involved.

1. The rural development work in a restricted area at the micro-level, howsoever intensive, comprehensive or integrated it may be, does not prove to be effective in bringing about fundamental changes in the structure of the rural society, without concurrent macro-level policy support aimed at certain basic changes in the social-economic framework and, if necessitated, through accompanying Constitutional amendments too. Unless some radical structural changes, as understood in the social science, are concomitantly brought about, no amount of the so-called rural development work would help us to create a social order based on equality and social justice and free of discrimination. Without ensuring such mutually supportive socio-political conditions at macro-level, the *status-quo* continues and, at best, only an idealised model like an 'Oasis in the Desert' is created, which does not support the marginalized majority. Ironically, it enables the upper classes and upper castes to enhance their capacity to further exploit and deprive the oppressed classes/castes. However, for us it has been an introspective process of un-learning or re-learning the otherwise widely debated norms about rural development.
2. There is close, vital and subtle relationship between the diverse history, geography, culture, traditions and beliefs of the people, on the one hand, and the prevailing political and Constitutional system and the governance in which rural development work is carried out, on the other hand. A rural worker has to consciously and critically take into consideration the socio-political process holistically - its currents and under-currents operating within the society. It is not possible to operate effectively if one keeps oneself isolated from the prevailing social forces and does not take the above factors into consideration. It is also mandatory to take into account the norms and practices of the contemporary society, namely, the concepts like Individual

Freedom, Civil Liberty, Socio-economic Equality, Social Justice, Ethical and Moral Values and others which constitute the vital pillars of the process of development and must not be either ignored or neglected.

3. The question of land ownership pattern in rural society i.e. the relations between the landlords and labourers as well as the issue of the incremental corporate ownership, if not even monopoly, over all other natural resources like water, forests and minerals, have crucial implications for rural development. However, in Functional Planning, as taught in rural development courses, these crucial issues are not taken into account and rural development is carried out not only within the prevailing socio-economic framework but also to reinforce it as well. Consequently, the rich become richer and the poor become poorer, thereby increasing inequality. Hence, our submission: *poverty is not the basic problem but inequality in ownership pattern of the natural resources is the fundamental problem* [emphasis mine]<sup>44</sup>.
4. While undertaking rural development work in any part of the country, the basic nature and characteristics of the agricultural and allied activities, namely, the long gestation period of 6 months between sowing and harvesting operations and, therefore, of receiving cash income in hand is to be recognised and taken into consideration. This is a fundamental difference between agriculture, on the one hand, and industry, trade or services, on the other, the income in the latter case being essentially immediate. This is a critical issue for the rural people. How does a farmer (and her/his dependents) survive till she/he gets the return from the harvest?

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<sup>44</sup>For a detailed elaboration of this basic principle, please see the author's Monograph entitled, 'Real Economic Problems of India: Inequality Not Poverty, Unemployment Not Growth', 2016. See Epilogue for data on increasing inequality in the Indian society as well as globally (pp.168-170). – Ed.



In the villages, there is a traditional system of economic relationship according to which the landless people who serve the farmers are dependent on farmers for their livelihood. The carpenters, blacksmiths, barbers, washermen, cobblers and landless labourers, essentially belonging to the oppressed castes, get a small share of the yield of the farmers for their services rendered during the previous year. Naturally, this serving community also has to wait till the harvest. At the same time, the impact of the long gestation period would be far more adverse on the artisans and the rest of the landless than on the land-owning farmers due to the inherent inequality between the two sections of the rural society.

5. Furthermore, the unfortunate cruel part is that, after putting in hard work on the way to the point of final agricultural product, the market and prices of the produce are not in the hands of the producer i.e. the farmer. The seller i.e. the farmer cannot decide or quote the price of her/his produce in the market. It is the traders and buyers who decide the price and the farmer has to sell the agricultural produce under compulsion at the buyer's quoted price and even the mode and timing of the payment. In contrast, in the case of industry, trade or services, the price of the product as well as the mode of payment is determined by the manufacturer/trader/service provider and not the buyer. This is gross injustice. Why is the farmer not allowed to decide the price of her/his product, taking into consideration all the input costs plus labour charges (either one's own or the hired labour) along with reasonable profit, just as the industrialists, the traders or the service providers are legally allowed to dictate the price of their product? This is one of the crucial issues of rural development, which has been sidelined by the planners as well as the practitioners like us since independence, in blatant violation of the Constitutional

provisions namely, Articles 15(1) and 38(2). Until and unless, such basic policy issues are not settled, no amount of rural development would resolve the prevailing rural crisis - a direct consequence of the increasing disparity between the cities and villages due to the pricing policies deliberately favouring the urban-based industry, trade and the service sector while blatantly discriminating against the rural-based agricultural and artisanal production as well as other multiple productive activities undertaken by the landless labour.

6. Apart from the unjust pricing policy, the Government policies also have a crucial role in sustaining the economic activities undertaken in rural development. The villagers lack resources and time for experimentation. They cannot be treated as entrepreneurs. Village industries/cottage industries need the support of the government for their smooth and continuous operations. Despite the full support of a VO, the experiment of economic activity can fail due to either lack of a policy or an unfavourable change therein<sup>45</sup>. The nature, too, would pose an unpredictable risk to farming and all allied activities.
7. The real yard stick of rural development is neither the construction of various buildings, roads and utilities or increase in agricultural production and income nor providing more welfare amenities. Admittedly, these are visible and measurable changes and are certainly required but the ultimate goal of rural development must not be reduced merely to such material and economic improvements. It has to go beyond and include moulding of the mindsets and human values of each member of the family, village community and the nation. More significantly, there is the

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<sup>45</sup>See Chapter 3, Sections 3.1.12 on how the lack of an appropriate policy support led to the collapse of a Cotton Ginning Co-operative Society of cotton growers and its Ginning Factory and Section 3.1.13 for an alternative marketing model operating in the voluntary sector successfully without policy support. – Ed.

question of human and social development which calls for increased community consciousness and fellow feeling. The human being must undergo transformation, the human values must prevail, and the finer qualities of fellow feeling must grow. We must strive to create a New Society with new human relationships, inculcating an urge to help each other unselfishly, sacrifice individual good for the community's well being, hard work in co-operation with each other and strengthening social harmony. Inevitably, creation of such a New Society can happen only by annihilating the hegemony of class, caste, creed, race, patriarchy, languages, birth place and the 'normal' body<sup>46</sup>. These should be the yard sticks of rural development. On the contrary, even after sustained rural work in Devapur Block, the community stands divided, the conflicts have increased and there are more cases in the police stations and the courts while the inter-family feuds for petty selfish interests have exacerbated.G27

8. Is this the development that inspired us? Or, the criterion should be how many of the finer human qualities stand incorporated through rural development!

In conclusion, please note that it is not my desire or intention to give you any advice on how to work in India's villages. Given the immense diversity of India, it would be foolhardy on my part even to think of undertaking such an impossible exercise. It is entirely for you to decide as to how to approach rural work. You are the best judge of the problems you would be engaged with. I only wished to share some of the lessons drawn by me from my grassroots experience. This is my duty towards the youth aspiring to take up rural development work. I readily grant the possibility that the lessons I have reported here may be partially or entirely

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<sup>46</sup>This assertion takes cue from the central logic of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's historic essay entitled, *Annihilation of Caste*, 1936 (For this essay's weblink, see Introduction, Footnote 12). – Ed.

misconceived. As Gautam Buddha stated: "Examine all ideas critically, irrespective of the source, and accept only those which make sense to you or appear to be logical." These lessons or suggestions may help you to propose a hypothesis and then either rule it out or confirm it on the basis of your experience. This would be a rational approach, free of misconceptions, prejudices and blind spots. Invariably, the TRUTH (*Satya*) is bitter. We have no option but to engage with it and reject it if it turns out to be false. My only hope is that, given your rational pursuit of the TRUTH, you would commit *new errors* on the way, rather than *repeating mine*. By doing this, you would add to human knowledge and wisdom. Ultimately, you shall be entirely responsible for exploring and arriving at your own TRUTH!

## SOME GUIDELINES FOR RURAL WORK

**B**ased on my grassroots experience as the coordinator of RWB-SDTT Project in Devapur Block, I would like to share some of my suggestions which may be viewed as broad guidelines for those young people who are either already engaged in Rural Development or are planning to undertake this challenge. In my opinion, our experiences have a specific relevance since these are based on the work carried out in a group of drought-prone nine villages located in a typical watershed area. Yet, what follows below are the general conclusions drawn in the larger context of Development and Social Change in India's rural society from the standpoint of the national policies as well as the VOs, while also keeping in view the international context. I consider it as my duty to share our free, frank, sincere and honest views and also our assessment based on the experiences at the micro-level with the younger generation.

1. In a broad sense, rural development work is primarily an educational process of learning and awareness building, both for the people and the worker. Rural development work, in a wider sense, may be considered as a process of community education. Community Development is also a process of creating community consciousness. The rural worker is, therefore, expected to provide healthy and honest leadership to the people, if the work has to be effective in terms of change in people's outlook and attitudes. However, if one wants to do genuine development of the community, through honest and sincere work, one must be willing and ready to displease some

of the people. One cannot always do well of the people just by pleasing them all the time. This is the paradox of development work, in the present political system of democracy based on the adult franchise. You may not be able to do their real good, if you are always trying to please them to get their vote. Even the non-political rural worker does not want to displease his people, because he wants their co-operation and participation in the programme and, therefore, the two objectives do not go together. For example, Family Planning work is a crucial programme for the good of the people but people do not want it. The real test of the leadership is when such programmes are to be undertaken even as the prevailing political system comes in the way of genuine work.

2. The behaviour and life style of the rural worker must be transparent, honest, forthright, hard-working such that the local people could emulate in their own life. Practicing what one preaches is crucial in rural work. A rural worker could make good of the lives of the people as well as one's own life by her/his style of functioning and approach to the people. All these small issues, howsoever minor they may appear to be, do matter significantly in the lives of the people. One has to be very careful in all of her/his dealings with the village people, outsiders and Government officials. If her/his image amongst the people is not good, she/he will not be able to win their confidence nor will be able to establish a healthy rapport with them.
3. The next lesson which I learnt from our experience is that if you want to serve the village people well and make them good human beings, you should not take any obligation from them, not even a cup of tea! You should not lose your freedom to share any idea with them forthrightly or even take any action against them, if the situation calls for such a stand. Yet, your approach ought to be flexible and accommodative but no compromise or adjustment should be made on matters of

principles. You should be compassionate and affectionate towards people but it should not result in charity or pity. While being helpful and reasonable, one should be impartial and treat everyone equally. It is important that you do not develop personal relationship or enter into private dealings with the people. Being sincere and honest in all of your dealings with the people is the best policy. Today, even the farmers have become clever and even selfish.

4. The real test of a good rural worker is how far she/he is able to maintain a proper balance in the matter of identifying oneself with the local people. If you want to work with a community honestly and unselfishly, you must try to identify yourself with the entire community - rich and poor alike and, to the extent possible, with all section of the society – men and women, young and old alike. At the same time, you must maintain a certain distance and be firm and strict, as and when necessary. It would be best to avoid any monetary dealing with the people you plan to work with. Try to avoid owning any movable or immovable property for yourself or your family in the area of your operation. This is one of the most delicate and difficult job but one must follow it.
5. In your daily routine work, you must try to help and interact with everybody in your operational area in all possible ways and co-operate with the whole community but do not make them dependent on you. Let them take their decisions, let them take initiative and do things on their own with their own resources fully, to the extent possible, under your advice, guidance and watchful eyes. They must respect you not only emotionally but also based upon your reasoning and knowledge while also ensuring that they do not indulge in hero-worshipping you. While maintaining your freedom, you may nurture cordial and harmonious relations with the people.
6. It is a wise policy not to start giving any material help to the people free of cost howsoever poor or desperate the concerned

individual, family or the community may be. Let them also put in their share or might and contribute substantially either in cash, kind or labour, not just as a token but real genuine contribution, with proper understanding and willingness but without any compulsion whatsoever. Let them realise that whatever they have done, produced or created, belongs to them. A sense of collective belonging and a stake in whatever they build or produce is key to meaningful and sustainable rural development.

7. While planning and implementing development or welfare programmes, we should be careful in not trying to thrust our urban ideas on the people. We should encourage the local people to articulate their genuine felt-needs, take initiative and decide collectively through consensus. Implementation of their decision should be on a co-operative basis, seeking active participation through mutual adjustment of the widest possible section of the community. Our role should be that of a facilitator, a catalyst and an enabler. We must be able to listen to all what they want to say, patiently, encouraging free and frank discussion and ensuring decisions in larger interest of all. While guiding a discussion, try to explain both the positive and the negative aspects of the issue, so that a common solution acceptable to all is arrived at. If a discussion is moving in an unhealthy direction, your duty is to make them aware of the pitfalls, with all the firmness and sincerity at your command. Be on your guard that neither they get away by fooling you nor should you ever try to do the same with them.
8. In every village community, there are always some healthy and unhealthy elements. While working with them, one must try to engage with them tactfully. Do not displease the unhealthy elements beyond a point. While not relying on hearsay or second hand reports, you must evolve methods to objectively examine and check every case on its merits. It is best not to antagonize any particular group since no one knows when they



will change sides. Maintaining a safe distance from both the helpful and the unhelpful groups is good policy since this enables you to take your own decisions in the optimum interest of all. All information and data being given to you needs to be cross-checked carefully before you start acting upon them. You need not be in haste to express your opinion or react on the spot. Take your time, deliberate, try and obtain confidential information from reliable sources and have double-check, before taking the next step. Listening and understanding different views and explaining your point of view frankly but without forcing it, will help you build a consensus in the community.

## INTROSPECTION ON SOME BASIC QUESTIONS

### Whither Development? Whither Society?

The earlier chapters establish how I lived and worked for Rural Development for about 35 years continuously at the grass-roots level (in drought prone area of the State of Maharashtra), supported by one single funding agency which gave me all the required freedom to plan and implement various rural development programmes, with support from a 'Team of Subject Matter Specialists'. It is now expected that some vital and fundamental questions, perhaps of a general nature and in the larger context of the whole country, are bound to arise. I am keen to share with you these questions which have been agitating my mind for quite some time, in the hope that these might be of relevance to those of you who may make it possible to locate the crucial answers.

When we settle down in a specific rural area with the objective of undertaking some development work with the co-operation and participation of the local people, we also try to identify ourselves with their aspirations and put in our best of efforts. Therefore, we expect to derive some inner satisfaction despite encountering problems, obstacles and even some failures and disappointments. I humbly wish to record here that, in spite of my sincere and hard work, I could not derive the much-expected inner satisfaction.

Let me try to explain this paradox. Our intentions and objectives were never limited to just bringing about material development of the people or to merely improve their socio-

economic conditions. Along with material and economic development, which we certainly did achieve to a fairly large extent, our goal was also to transform the quality of life, instil human values and improve social relationships. We were keen that, with improving material and economic conditions, the people would retain, if not even further enrich, their finer human sensitivities and values which they had in ample measure before we started our work in 1955. *As reported earlier, while we found the local people to be, by and large, impoverished and without any support system, they were definitely ethically rich, having finer sensitivities for each other. Undoubtedly, they were better human beings, with greater mutual fellow-feeling and concern among them.* Presently, the scenario stands completely changed. Our evaluation reports, backed up with statistics, establish that, on the whole, they are comparatively having a much more comfortable life than before, enjoying good food, clothing, shelter, employment and livelihood and better educational and health facilities and other amenities along with the modern means of transport, recreation and comforts. *However, to my great shock, disappointment and frustration, I find that, in the race for material and economic development, we have lost the good old human being of the drought-prone impoverished Devapur Project villages. In the process, the people have become far more selfish, greedy and individualistic, leading to loss of fellow-feeling and sense of mutual co-operation.* There are more vices, increased quarrels within the family as well as the community, instigated by petty jealousies and conflicts. There are more crimes and more cases registered at the police stations and in the courts and, therefore, several-fold more lawyers to deal with them. The local people are invariably under stress, not only the first generation but also the next generation, despite the so-called better 'education' and other amenities. Ironically, through our efforts and SDTT's funds, we managed to provide the Devapur Project area people with all possible sources of prosperity but this prosperity led to loss of the finer human qualities, happiness and a life of

satisfaction. Hence, my question: Why is it that the impoverished human being has finer human sensitivities and social consciousness than when she/he becomes prosperous with access to amenities and comforts? ***Why do the finer qualities of a human being get eroded during her/his material and economic improvement?***

I have discussed the above issue of my inner dissatisfaction and growing frustration in relation to my rural development experience with several learned and reputed persons but all of them maintained that this is a very common problem, with no meaningful answer. Several people have tried to resolve this problem in different ways, e.g. through education, through religion or through cultural activities but the experience remains the same.

And, therefore, the next logical question: If it is so, then why do we pursue the so-called progress and development and for what purpose? Why do we try to improve the material conditions of people, if we cannot make them happy? Such questions may appear to be philosophical and not of any practical use but the fact remains that these do address the larger issue of how do we influence human consciousness which in turn determines outlook, attitudes and, finally, human behaviour, irrespective of the material and economic conditions. *What is then the solution, if, at all, there is one? With the help of money, material and manpower, it is easier to achieve the so-called development and progress and improve the material and economic conditions but I do not know how to sensitise the human being? How does one ensure that we do not become more selfish, accept vices, become jealous or get involved in conflicts, to the detriment of humankind? Is it only because of materialism, consumerism, urbanization, modernization and industrialization<sup>47</sup>? Is it also because of the very nature of science and technology or is it because of the misuse that we make of Science and Technology?*

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<sup>47</sup>As noted in Chapter 7 (Footnote 43), digitalisation would have been certainly listed here by the author but for the fact that the ill-effects of digitalization (see Introduction, Footnote 20 for the ill-effects) were not apparent in sufficient measure in 2006 when the manuscript was completed. – Ed.

I am well aware that the issue being raised by me is a complex one, involving various social, cultural, political and economic forces within the society but there must be some rational way to resolve it. Furthermore, this is not the end of the problem.

We tend to argue that education could provide a solution. The general adage holds that if the person is illiterate and un-educated, she/he must be first provided education. But, does education really transform the human being into becoming a better human being? This question leads to my next big question. My observation tells me that the more an individual is 'educated', the more skills she/he acquires to manipulate, exploit and oppress others. A formally 'educated' person is less inclined to help others than otherwise. 'Educated' persons generally tend to be more self-centred, sectarian and manipulative than illiterate and poor but hard-working persons. Just as Science and Technology is a double-edged knife, ***education is similarly a double-edged tool, which can be used to do good or to harm the society. Why then educate the people?***

Why does a poor, uneducated and illiterate person reveals vices as soon as her/his material and economic condition improves and/or she/he gets the so-called 'benefit' of education following which her/his tendencies to help others diminish rapidly. *Generally speaking, a person, whether an upper caste or a SC/ST/OBC or suffering from any other deprivation, gets an opportunity by gaining a higher position in society, she/he is more than likely to use her/his knowledge and skills to exploit not only others but her/his own brethren, too. What then is the sociology and/or psychology that operates behind this phenomenon?* These are some of my fundamental questions whose answers I am seeking.

Under such discouraging and frustrating conditions, I am left with no option but to ask what then is the role of Voluntary Organizations (VOs)<sup>48</sup> in development, particularly in the rural areas? Are they in a position to bring about the change in human society, as visualized by us? Are they capable of ensuring that people retain their human sensitivity and fellow-feeling, even after achieving material and economic progress? *Can the VOs play a constructive role to ensure transformation into a happier society, improved material and economic conditions notwithstanding? Or, are they only expected to bring about physical, material and economic development, not human development? In this discussion, I would prefer to clearly differentiate between DEVELOPMENT/ PROGRESS, on the one hand, and TRANSFORMATION, on the other.*

It is generally understood that the Government and its various Development Agencies are not at all in a position to bring about or even think of bringing about a genuine change and/or transformation amongst the people and communities. Therefore, the role of bringing about this kind of transformation is left to the VOs. However, as pointed out in Chapter 7, the VOs work in rural areas, under severe limitations and constraints. Significantly, the structure of the society, the socio-economic framework, the political and cultural set-up is a given factor for them and they are expected to do only Functional Development work, which, too, is further limited by the lack of adequate finance, infra-structure and manpower. Therefore, my humble opinion is that the VOs are not in a position to bring about any basic or fundamental transformation in the society or even inculcate human sensitivity and fellow feeling among the people. They are only meant to carry out patch work here and there i.e. only Functional Development, despite the fact that some of them may be fully committed to bring about fundamental

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<sup>48</sup>In order to appreciate the reason for using the term Voluntary Organisations (VOs) here and not Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), please see Footnote 19 in Introduction to be read with Footnote 42 in Chapter VII. – Ed.

transformation in the structure of the society. Since such a fundamental transformation is an outright political question, most of the VOs, with honourable exceptions apart, are not in a position to engage with it. If and when, they do so, they are immediately labelled by the state as anti-nationals, radical leftists and even as naxalites<sup>49</sup>. Realising this political reality, even the genuine VOs committed to bringing about fundamental transformations in society do not express their views and end up making the required adjustments and compromises for their survival.

***This then sums up the paradox. In an unequal society like ours, 'development' would only increase and deepen inequality, leading to further concentration of wealth and the means of production accelerating exploitation and impoverishment. Clearly, inequality is India's basic socio-economic problem, not poverty<sup>50</sup>. Under these conditions, it would be wise for the state to change the socio-economic structure through radical land reforms, fixing both the minimum wages and maximum incomes and similarly minimum and maximum assets, all of which would need to be backed by appropriate Constitutional amendments, thereby making the required statutory provisions possible. It is only after such fundamental transformations are brought about that the commitment, the energies, the abilities and the skills of the VOs would be better utilised for building a humane society. This alone would ensure a march towards a truly democratic India founded on equality, justice, liberty and fraternity, as per the principles enshrined in the Constitution.***

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<sup>49</sup>During the past 5 years of NDA-II rule, a new term i.e. 'Urban Naxals', has been invented by the government to discredit the genuine VOs along with their democratic and patriotic activists and intellectuals. – Ed.

<sup>50</sup>See Chapter 8, Footnote 44 for reference to the author's Monograph for a detailed elaboration of this principle. – Ed.

### **Addressing the Readers: My Agonising Question(s), Seeking Your Answer(s)**

As I have mentioned earlier, about 50 years ago, the people of the drought-prone Maan Taluka, where Sir Dorabji Tata Trust worked for rural development, were severely impoverished. There was misery all-round, with no drinking water during summer, no roads, no electricity and no means of communication. Even after working hard the whole day, they were unable to get two proper meals. They had no proper shelter, and no educational or medical facilities. Under these conditions, most of the people had to go hungry or migrate to the Konkan region for about 6 months along with the entire family, in search of work, water and fodder for their animals.

However, on the whole, the majority of the people were simple and straight forward. There was sincerity and honesty. People were not crooked or selfish. They were humane and willing to help each others. Sharing whatever little they had with their neighbours or guests, was a normal social practice. *Although not educated in formal terms, they were highly cultured. They did not know much about the outside world but they had human sensitivity towards others. They could not read or write but they were united and infused with wisdom .*

During the past 50 years, various types of Government agencies and several Voluntary Organizations, including the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, worked for the development and progress of these people by spending huge funds. As a result, the economic conditions of the people improved and there is significant material progress. The agricultural production increased in quantity & variety. Instead of the then usual cereal crops like Bajri, Maize and Jawar, they are now also taking cash crops like cotton, groundnut, onion, sugarcane and pomegranate, which ensure them higher income in cash. Dairy, sheep and goats, as subsidiary activities, also give an added income. In short, there is definite improvement in the living standards and even prosperity. Besides, all other facilities and



amenities like education, health, transport, and communication have significantly improved. There are better roads, with the State Transport buses plying every few hours. The electric power and the telephone services are easily available in each house. The people have *pucca* (cemented) houses in place of the old huts. The consumable items in the homes have increased tremendously. Many of the families have motor-cycles of their own. In short, they have more of everything in terms of material and economic prosperity.

However, there is hardly any happiness or self-satisfaction. Unity and fellow-feeling have been eroded along with the loss of finer human qualities. Internal feuds and conflicts within the family and the village are common features. Petty politics has fuelled multiple quarrels among several groups for selfish gains. The former willingness to help each other stands replaced by all round selfishness. Various kinds of vices like drinking, gambling and opium addiction have spread beyond reasonable limits. In every family, young and old, men and women all are in some way or the other involved in such vices. ***When the Trust started work five decades ago, there were hardly 5 to 10 lawyers in the whole Maan Taluka. Today, more than 50 to 75 lawyers are flourishing, at the cost of the villagers. There is hardly any desire left to work in co-operation with each other. People have, by and large, learnt to achieve one's petty objectives by any means, crooked or otherwise.***

Hence, the crucial question: Why is it so? Why do the finer qualities of a human being prevail under poverty, stress, misery, disease and suffering? Why does a person tend to become selfish, corrupt, cruel, dishonest and insincere, under the conditions of prosperity, when she/he has more to eat and more to lead a comfortable life? This is a million dollar question agitating my inner self, after having worked hard at the grass-roots with the people for 35 years in adverse conditions.

There is universal praise for all the good work I did with the help of Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, by quitting the city of Mumbai (then Bombay) at the age of 25 years and working with the people for the next 35 years for their betterment, in a backward area. However, this does not satisfy me at all. As a student of social science, I have introspected over the afore-mentioned issues deeply for the last 15 years but I have not been able to find any meaningful answer. I had no intention to write such a book on my experience for the sake of publicity. It is only because I have not been able to find any answers to my agonising questions and my painful suffering from within that I decided to put down my views in the form of a book, in the hope that my readers will try to help me in finding an answer that makes logical sense. Here is the pointed question that agonises me: *After obtaining higher education in social science and applying the knowledge by working sincerely with the people, have I done well of the people or have I led them to more misery and suffering? Why does poverty bring out good qualities of a human being and why do they disappear when she/he is better off, when the material conditions improve? Why does such a paradoxical transformation take place?*

This indeed is a complex situation with multi-dimensional issues interwoven into each other and related to economic, political, social, and ethical questions, calling for an integrated approach in order to arrive at a credible resolution. I have raised several similar questions in the previous pages. In the larger context, I try to summarize these questions into the following four categories.

### **Economic Questions**

1. The process of development in an unequal society, willingly or unwillingly, leads to increase in inequality. The gap

between the rich and the poor widens. Why is it so and what can be done to prevent or mitigate it?

2. One solution appears to be equitable distribution of the natural resources and means of production like land and water, as directed by the Constitution in Articles 39(b) and 39(c) respectively. But how could it be done?
3. In the field of social science, two types of planning, namely Structural Planning and Functional Planning have been recognized. But what we generally do and what I did for 35 years is only the Functional Planning without bringing about any change in the structure of the society. ***I now know that real change is not possible without basic and fundamental changes in the social structure – the socio-economic framework of the society.*** The core question is how to bring about changes in the structure of the society?
4. Economic development invariably leads to consumerism in the rural areas also. This alienates the people from the movement for social transformation. How do we prevent or minimise consumerism?

### **Political Questions**

5. We need to focus upon the problem of organizing the masses in the rural areas, particularly the agricultural labourers, into an effective and sustainable mass movement for *(a) short term gains and benefits; and (b) long term goal of creating a new society*. What strategy needs to be adopted in order to meet both the objectives?
6. The next important and vital question is of uniting and bringing together all Voluntary Organizations (VOs) and social activists of the country on one Non-party Political Platform, so that wider policy changes on macro-issue could be effected at national and international levels.

7. The experience of the present democratic system of the Government as evolved by our rulers during the last 70 years has resulted in instability and chaos and raised serious questions regarding the vexed issues of Individual Freedom, Civil Liberties, equitable distribution of resources, wealth and income and Social Justice. What is to be done?

### **Social Questions**

8. Economic Development leads to increased wealth and prosperity for a narrow section of society in rural areas, too. However, with prosperity, human beings lose their finer qualities and sensitivities. Under poverty, suffering and misery the finer human qualities and sensitivities are reinforced. Why is it so? What could be done to ensure that the innate human goodness is not eroded?
9. Formal Education may not necessarily promote social awareness and rational thinking. What is to be done to inculcate human consciousness and rationality through educational transformation?

### **Ethical Question**

10. Material development and economic prosperity also bring along various types of vices, like drinking, drug addiction, gambling, litigations, feuds, murders and other crimes including sexual violence, both domestic and in the public spaces. This leads to more misery suffering and degeneration of the value system and instability in society. What could be done to retain and strengthen the human values?

With all the development and progress in science and technology, we have now entered the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *We have gone beyond the skies into the space and have access to material prosperity beyond imagination in the previous century. However, where is the happiness that Gautam Buddha and Mahavira sought more than 2,500 years ago? Where is the satisfaction we sought in*

***our own lifetime?*** This is the vital question that I pose before my mature readers. I appeal to my readers to help me in finding the answer that has evaded me for long. Many learned and wise people tell me that the experience that I have documented in this book is part of the universal experience. But this generalization does not satisfy me. Nor should it satisfy any of my readers. This is because the question(s) I pose and the answer(s) I seek are not in my personal domain. Our collective pursuit (yours and mine) is entirely in the public domain. Let us promise to ourselves that we will certainly persist in the pursuit of *SATYA* until the core question – ‘Why is it so?’ - is resolved.

### **Afterthoughts**

In the final analysis, it may be stated that, certainly and without any doubt, the living conditions of the villagers of the Devapur Project area have significantly improved. As a result of the intensive work carried out by the Project in the field of soil and water conservation, excavation of a large number of old and new wells and taking-up of several small size Group Lift-Irrigation Schemes, the cropping pattern of agriculture has changed from single to a double crop, one of which is a commercial crop like cotton, groundnut or sugar cane. Activities in the field of Animal Husbandry - cattle, sheep, goats and fishing - have given the villagers additional income. Today, they are much better-off. They have more food to eat, better clothes to wear, better facilities for education and health, housing, roads, communication and transport. The physical and material life of the people is undoubtedly better than before. As a result of education, thanks to the Late Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil, at least one member of each family is now employed in the nearby town and provides additional income to one's family. Some of them have become professionals like Doctors, Engineers, Professors and Teachers, thanks to the scholarships provided by the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust.

But at the same time, it must be admitted that the major share of those benefits of the rural development work has gone to the landowners and the other well-to-do in the villages. Those villagers, who earlier had productive assets or some means of production like land, water and animals are much better-off today than others, namely the artisans and the landless labour. The impoverished and the weaker sections of society, who did not have any means of production except their labour, have not benefitted much. They have got only marginal benefits from the development activities. It is, therefore, my humble view that ***the fundamental inequalities in the social structure is the real issue, not poverty which is only a consequence of the former.*** On account of the development programmes being implemented in an unequal society, the gap between the haves and have-nots has widened and is gradually increasing. The educational, health and welfare facilities provided by us are more availed of by the rich and better-off. In short, what has been done is only a Functional type of rural development work, within the existing socio-economic structure and the prevailing unequal society. ***Unless and until, changes in the social structure namely, the ownership pattern of land and water, are simultaneously undertaken and implemented effectively, the benefits of the Functional Development programmes will not reach the impoverished and weaker sections of the society.***

Further, I would like to submit most humbly but more importantly that as a result of increase in income and material prosperity, the villagers have become more selfish, more jealous and more narrow-minded. There is more greed, more competition and easy availability of money in the villages. This has resulted in more vices and crimes of all types. Corruption and consumerism is flourishing at the village level also. There is less desire to work hard on land and with hands. There is a major but adverse change in the mindset of the younger generation. They want quick money by any means, crooked or otherwise. The earlier fellow-feeling within the family and in the village community has almost disappeared.

The family and the community as institutions are disintegrating. There is hardly any community consciousness left. When I went to the villages in early 1950s, the people were poor but they were happy and satisfied. They were willing to help each other in difficult times. Today, their concern is restricted to oneself and, if at all, to the family only. They have little desire to help even their relatives and neighbours. On the contrary, they try to create obstacles for each other. In spite of having more of everything in material terms, there is neither personal satisfaction nor love for others. ***There are more family and inter-family feuds resulting in physical quarrels and conflicts, turning into police and court cases. The social attitude of the people in general is going from bad to worse. And, this to my mind, is one of the core elements constituting the paradox of rural development.***

Of course, this phenomenon is not restricted to the nine villages of the Devapur Project in Maan Taluka, where I worked. I agree that it has become a national problem, calling for the highest political attention as far as the prevailing model of rural development is concerned. It is, therefore, a matter of great concern not only for the people of the nine villages but a matter of concern for all of us, particularly our educated youth, intellectuals, our policy makers and planners, our students and teachers and the civil society represented by the Voluntary Organizations. There is serious moral and ethical degeneration as well as dismantling of the socio-economic and political fabric of the society. The socio-political system must change fundamentally. ***Let us all introspect as to where we are going and where we should go, before we lose our Swaraj, as Dr. Ambedkar cautioned us with an amazing foresight almost 80 years ago<sup>51</sup> and before it is too late!***

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<sup>51</sup> Ambedkar, B. R. (May, 1936), *Annihilation of Caste*, [http://cnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/mmt/ambedkar/web/readings/aoc\\_print\\_2004.pdf](http://cnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/mmt/ambedkar/web/readings/aoc_print_2004.pdf) p. 40 (Cited in Introduction, Footnote 13).

## EPILOGUE

"On the 26th of January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics we will be recognising the principle of one man one vote and one vote one value. In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man one value. How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up."

- Babasaheb Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's speech  
at the Constituent Assembly, 25th November 1949

The original manuscript of this book was written in English in the year 2006 and its Marathi edition was published on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2006. However, the publishing of the English version was delayed over a decade, especially because the manuscript of the year 2006 had to undergo major revisions in view of my continuing introspection and consequent analysis of my grass-roots experience. The comprehensive Introduction to the English version has built up the required analytical framework for the readers.



Now that the significantly revised and improved English edition is being published, it is necessary to take stock of present socio-economic and political context and critically review some of the earlier conclusions in light of the developments since then.

In the meantime, my continuing reflections on the experiences of the Devapur Project along with studies on the questions of political economy of India as well as the world have led me to understand that rural development has to be premised afresh on the following formulation:

**Real Economic Problems of India: Inequality, Not Poverty; Unemployment, Not [Economic] Growth**

Based upon the published data and reports in various recent surveys, magazines and newspapers, read along with the writings of Prof. Thomas Piketty, Professor at the Paris School of Economics and Prof. Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel Laureate in Economics, inspired me to compile all such reports, basically on inequality and unemployment, and bring out a Monograph in the year 2016 for limited public dissemination and discussion. The aforesaid one-liner formulation was adopted as the title of my Monograph.

At the beginning of this Epilogue, we decided to recall a few lines from Dr. Ambedkar's historic speech delivered to the Constituent Assembly on 25th November 1949 just when, in his capacity as the Chairperson of the Drafting Committee, he presented the Draft Constitution to the Chairperson of the Constituent Assembly, Dr. Rajendra Prasad. These lines bring out powerfully and with characteristic clarity Dr. Ambedkar's deep concern regarding the continued denial of "equality in our social and economic life", followed by his prophetic warning that, if the DENIAL by the ruling classes and castes is not replaced by Indian state's Constitutional COMMITMENT "at the earliest possible moment", none should be surprised if "those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy." What follows in the Epilogue is primarily inspired by Dr.

Ambedkar's ideas and ideology calling for urgent reconstruction of Indian society and polity.

Some of the overarching socio-economic macro-parameters (also underlined in Chapters 7, 8 and 10) indicate that situation has worsened during the past decade, especially during the last five years. Here is a brief overview (not exhaustive, only indicative) of the twin issues of inequality and unemployment, organically interlinked with the deepening socio-political crisis of the country, especially the rural crisis reflected in the upsurge of the farmers' movements in the last few years with alarming rise in their 'pent up anguish'.

## A. INEQUALITY

Oxfam, an international human rights organisation, released its 'Reward Work, Not Wealth' Report-2017<sup>52</sup> on the study of the world-wide Inequality just before the meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) held at Davos in January 2018, attended by world leaders including India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The following are some selected excerpts from the Report - the first five regarding India and the last one on the global situation.

- India's richest 1% usurped as much as 73% of the total wealth generated (GDP) in the country in 2017. Further, 67 crore Indians, comprising the population's poorest half, saw their wealth rise by just 1% in 2017.
- India's richest 1% held a huge 58% of the country's total wealth *i.e. the stock of wealth, and not just the wealth generated in a year* – higher than the comparable global figure of about 50%. Further, India's top 10% of population holds 73% of the wealth.

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<sup>52</sup>Source: (i)

[https://www.oxfamamerica.org/static/media/files/Reward\\_Work\\_Not\\_Wealth\\_Full\\_Report\\_-\\_English\\_-\\_Embargo\\_22\\_January\\_2018.pdf](https://www.oxfamamerica.org/static/media/files/Reward_Work_Not_Wealth_Full_Report_-_English_-_Embargo_22_January_2018.pdf); & (ii)

<https://thewire.in/economy/richest-1-cornered-73-wealth-generated-india-2017-oxfam-survey>.

- The wealth of India's richest 1% increased by over Rs 20.9 lakh crore during 2017 — ***an amount equivalent to the total budget of the central government in 2017-18***. Further, the country added 17 new billionaires last year, taking the total number to 101. The Indian billionaires' wealth increased to over Rs 20.7 lakh crore – increasing during the last year by Rs 4.89 lakh crore, ***an amount sufficient to finance 85% of all of Indian states' budget on health and education***.
- In India, *it will take 941 years for a minimum wage worker in rural India to earn what the top paid executive at a leading Indian garment firm earns in a year.*
- The *Indian women workers often find themselves at the bottom of the heap in terms of their wages* and nine out of ten billionaires are men.
- At the global level, the year 2017 saw an unprecedented increase in the number of billionaires, at a rate of one every two days. Billionaire wealth has risen by an average of 13% a year since 2010 – six times faster than the wages of ordinary workers, which have risen by a yearly average of just 2%. The last year also witnessed that 82% of the wealth generated worldwide went to the 1%, while 3.7 billion people that account for the poorest half of population saw no increase in their wealth.

With Prime Minister Narendra Modi attending the WEF meeting in Davos, ***Oxfam India urged the Indian government to ensure that the country's economy works for everyone and not just the fortunate few***. It asked the government to promote inclusive growth by encouraging labour-intensive sectors that will create more jobs; investing in agriculture; and effectively implementing the social protection schemes that exist. Oxfam India also sought sealing of the 'Leaking Wealth Bucket' by taking stringent measures against tax evasion and avoidance, imposing higher tax on super-rich and removing corporate tax breaks. In addition, Oxfam's Report

drew Indian Government's attention to "the key factors driving up rewards for shareholders and corporate bosses at the expense of workers' pay and conditions; include erosion of workers' rights; excessive influence of big business over government policy-making; and the relentless corporate drive to minimise costs in order to maximise returns to shareholders."

The Oxfam India CEO said it is alarming that the benefits of economic growth in India continue to concentrate in fewer hands. She clarified, ***"The billionaire boom is not a sign of a thriving economy but a symptom of a failing economic system. Those working hard, growing food for the country, building infrastructure, working in factories are struggling to fund their child's education, buy medicines for family members and manage two meals a day. The growing divide undermines democracy and promotes corruption and cronyism."***

## **B. UNEMPLOYMENT AND DISEMPLOYMENT**

- According to the report of the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE)<sup>53</sup>, the unemployment rate in December 2018 rose to 7.38% from 4.78% in December 2017, highest since September 2016 when it stood at a high of 8.46%.
- In December 2017, a total of 26.94 crore people were employed in rural parts of the country, which dropped to 26.03 crores in the month of December 2018, amounting to a loss of 91 Lakh jobs in the rural areas alone. Remaining about 18 lakh jobs were lost in the urban parts of the country with the overall numbers of employed declining to 13.66 crores from 13.84 crores.
- Of the total 1.09 crore jobs lost in the last 12-month period (December 2017 to December 2018), about 83% jobs were lost in rural areas, the remaining 17% jobs lost in urban areas.

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<sup>53</sup>Source: <https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/1-crore-jobs-lost-in-2018-unemployment-rate-hits-27-month-high-in-december-says-cmie-key-things-to-know/1435748/>

As is well known, the unemployment of the youth has become one of the most critical problems of the country. The high decibel political promise made during elections to provide 2 crore jobs/year (Lok Sabha Elections-2014), as part of the then hypnotising '*achhe din ayenge*' sloganeering, has lost its credibility altogether. The political leadership which made this promise in the Lok Sabha Elections-2014 did not dare to even refer to it during the Lok Sabha Elections-2019. Nor did it repeat the '*achhe din ayenge*' sloganeering since the reality of rising inequality and unemployment, apart from the farmers' crisis, could not be wished away. Today, no political party is willing to take a stand on the issue of unemployment - moral, ideological or programmatic, except resorting to the diversionary route of promising how many of the unfilled posts in the government they would fill if they return to power, knowing fully well that the government posts constitute a miniscule proportion of the youth demanding employment.

The reasons for the increasing rate of unemployment call for a thorough scrutiny as they have deep contextual roots in the experience of the Devapur Project, especially in relation to the new generation of the educated youth, with serious implications for the future of the nation (See Chapters 8 and 10). This is particularly crucial because almost half of India's population is in the age group that is looking for employment, whether formally educated or not. We will briefly examine this question in the wider perspective informed by various socio-economic factors and policy imperatives of recent years, including the critical data presented above on Inequality. The following selected issues may be noted:

- a) Since globalisation of Indian economy in 1991, we have seen a period of almost three decades marked by the phenomenon of 'Job-less Economic Growth'. The present increased rate of Unemployment for both the categories of youth viz., 'formally educated with degrees/diplomas' (mostly from the urban areas) and the 'not formally educated without degrees/diplomas' (mostly from the rural areas), is a direct

consequence of the 'Neoliberal Model of Development'. In the Neoliberal Model, *the GDP rises without generating adequate jobs*. How can, therefore, a political leadership with any worthwhile understanding of India's political economy promise to generate 2 crore jobs/year in Lok Sabha Elections-2014? ***One may have empathy for the political leadership if it had both the moral courage and the imagination to concomitantly announce the agenda of steadily withdrawing from the 'Neoliberal Model of Development' and instead building either a 'Capitalist Model of Development without Neoliberalism' or, even far better, a 'Socialist Model of Development', the latter 'Socialist Model' having the historically proven capacity to generate adequate employment for any society.***

- b) We recall that India's rural crisis is ***"a direct consequence of the increasing disparity between the cities and villages due to the pricing policies deliberately favouring the urban-based industry, trade and the service sector while blatantly discriminating against the rural-based agricultural and artisanal production as well as other multiple productive activities undertaken by the landless labour"*** (Excerpted from Chapter 8, p. 144). No wonder that the CMIE report found that "Of the total 1.09 crore jobs lost in the last 12-month period (December 2017 to December 2018), about 83% jobs were lost in rural areas, the remaining 17% jobs lost in urban areas." It may be pertinent to record here that the discriminatory pricing policies tilted against the rural economy also constitute the fundamental cause of the heightening rural crisis, resulting in the unmitigated indebtedness of the farmers and the consequent suicidal rate and desperate migration to cities which, in turn, leads to social instability as well as threat to the democratic politics and weakening of the moral fabric of the society, as Stiglitz had earlier warned.

- c) Let us recall the data-based extreme inequalities presented above that India is suffering from. How can then one expect that the Indian state can even think of offering *dignified employment* to its crores of youth, mockingly called the Demographic Dividend, *with equal opportunity and social justice*? Nothing less than this would the Constitution ever permit. This issue would pose a historic challenge to the newly mandated 17th Lok Sabha. No Lok Sabha has ever faced a challenge of such magnitude - the challenge of providing dignified employment to all of its youth with equal opportunity and social justice. Of even greater concern is the fact that this formidable challenge is to be faced in a society that carries the historic load of extreme inequalities, rooted in caste, class, creed, patriarchy, race, birth place, language and 'normal body' and that, too, when the nation's political economy is being dictated terms by the **Neo-liberal Capital riding piggy-back on the *Hindu Rashtra* forces**<sup>54</sup>. Would the Parliament call for the moral support of the 130 crore plus people of India in taking up the challenge forthwith of eliminating inequalities and unemployment, liberating the farmers from the cycles of debts and turning the rural crisis into an historic opportunity for building a new social and economic order? Undoubtedly, the Indian masses would not hesitate a bit in offering its moral support, provided the political leadership has the moral courage to make the required political appeal with due ground-level preparations<sup>55</sup>.

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<sup>54</sup>See Introduction, Section entitled 'On the Role of VOs/NGOs', for elaboration of this anti-people, anti-Constitutional and anti-national contemporary political phenomenon.

<sup>55</sup>An outstanding example from the recent history is the massive nation-wide response to an honest appeal made by the Late Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri during the 1965-66 Indo-Pak War to the people to give up one meal a day to save food for the *Jawans* fighting at the border. Given the moral stature and sincerity of the Prime Minister Shastri, not the mere numbers of the Congress MPs in the

- d) Howsoever limited potential of job generation the Neoliberal Model of Development may have innately possessed, it faces further incremental attrition under the assault by the 'crazy' rush for automation in three successively dangerous phases of (a) mechanisation (mid-19th century to date); (b) digitalisation<sup>56</sup> (late 20th century to date); and the most aggressively anti-human of all times viz., (c) Artificial Intelligence through its Robotics (early 21st century to date). Each of these three 'successively dangerous phases' of automation is designed to discard or reduce the human agency and build a society essentially 'without human beings'. In this Orwellian cynical design, the technology, especially the latter two viz., digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence, is driven strictly by the Finance Capital invested in the world's most powerful stock exchanges, like London, New York, Beijing and Tokyo.

Nowhere in any of these Stock Exchanges, you would find a *khadi dhoti*-clad Gandhi with spectacles staring at the Computer screen with stock prices flying high or tumbling down and asserting, ***"I am not against any technology as long as it does not cause unemployment."*** For Gandhi, all technologies were welcome provided these do not dis-employ people i.e. human beings since Gandhi's ideology was aimed at building happy and peaceful human communities, not 'Superpower' *Hindu Rashtra*, driven by the Finance Capital at world's stock exchanges.

### **An Imaginary Dialogue Between Mahatma Gandhi and India's Present Political Leadership**

Hence, no one should be surprised if, at this historic conjuncture of the dawn of the much-hyped 4th Industrial Revolution, ***Gandhi***

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Parliament, the people's massive response was unprecedented in Indian democratic history.

<sup>56</sup>See Introduction, Footnote 20, for some observations on the dehumanising role that Digitalisation is already playing in the world.



**places only the following two options before India's political leadership:**

- (i) Support the Indian people to organise an *Insaaniyat Satyagrah*, in the style of the 'Salt Satyagrah' and in alliance with 'Occupy Wall Street' movement with the slogan "We are the 99%", at each of the aforesaid Stock Exchanges engaged in the mad rush to invest trillions of dollars in the 'Disemployment Technology' and compel them to withdraw investment from such a technology that builds 'Dehumanised Societies', and if necessary, ***by threatening them with 'Non-cooperation Movement' i.e. withdrawal of India from the global market and also walking out of the forthcoming WTO inter-ministerial meeting unless it allows the Indian government to provide all the required subsidy to resolve the agricultural crisis;***

OR ELSE

- (ii) I hereby withdraw not only my spectacles from the Swachhata Abhiyan but also withdraw the presumed permission to immorally use me or any part of my writings or personality, politically or philosophically, for promoting the Neoliberal Capitalist Model of Development, dictated by the global capitalism and its varied agencies and Stock Exchanges - riding piggy-back on the *Hindu Rashtra* forces. Although I have already forgiven the representative of the *Hindu Rashtra* ideology who killed me on 30th January 1948, this anti-people, anti-Constitutional and anti-national ideology continues to negate not only the Freedom Struggle but also the Constitution. ***I am persuaded to point it out since the Neoliberal Capitalist Model of Development so slavishly pursued by you can never generate adequate dignified employment with equal opportunity and Social Justice as mandated by the Constitution while also massively dis-employing youth. In addition, this development model leads***

***to a de-humanized India which is incrementally evident as you ruthlessly push your twin 'Skill India' and 'Digital India' missions, apart from also reinforcing the anti-farmer and anti-rural artisan policies along with the Green Revolution technology that originally sowed the seeds of the prevailing agricultural crisis!***

We also reproduce here the following hand-written Note we found appended to the above offer by Gandhi of his two options to India's present political leadership: "If you have some problem in understanding the political implications of my two options, I suggest that you read Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar's historic speech delivered at the Constituent Assembly on 25th November 1949 along with his seminal essay entitled 'Annihilation of Caste' (1936). This should enable you to take a decision that would liberate India from the clutches of the Neo-liberal Capitalism and the caste system along with the patriarchy embedded therein. This should put India's destiny back on the Constitutional path as per the aspirations of the Freedom Struggle and the Constitutional imperatives. I take this opportunity to clarify that, despite some differences of perception between the two of us, I held Dr. Ambedkar in the highest esteem for the depth of his scholarship, uncompromising commitment to annihilate caste and patriarchy and the vision of building an economy rooted in equitable distribution of the means of production and natural resources. This is why when Jawaharlal Nehru was exploring whom to assign the responsibility of drafting the Constitution, I suggested Dr. Ambedkar for this historic task and Jawaharlal readily accepted my suggestion."

Until we find out what happened to the above two options offered by Mahatma Gandhi to India's present political leadership and, indirectly to the Parliament also, there is nothing worthwhile left that we can add to this Epilogue.

## APPENDIX

### Selected Letters and Notes from the Author<sup>57</sup>

#### (1)

Date 14.11.2006

Dear Anil,

As agreed, I am sending you a copy of the computer-typed manuscript of the proposed book I have tried to write about our Devapur Work and some of my views and conclusions arrived at by me on the basis of 35 years of experience in rural development.

I know, perhaps you may find it totally rubbish and nonsense but, whatever it is, I want you to go through it whenever you have some time and you are at ease. And then if you find some meaning or any substance in it, I want your help in correcting it or re-writing it, if necessary. To me the essence and its spirit are more important. The language, the style and its presentation are not so important. I just want the message, which I wish to convey to the readers, should reach them in some form or other.

The first five chapters, which describe the work done by us and the magnitude of development brought about are not so very important. But the last five chapters on our experiences and what we have learnt are very important. I need your help more on these last five chapters.

Anil, basically I am not a writer but a rural worker, so there are large number of errors. I have been so 'obsessed' by some of my views on Rural Development and Social Change that (a) there are many repetitions of the same views; (b) the sentences are very long; (c) in some cases, there may not be proper linkage also; (d) there are errors in grammar as well as construction; and (e) spelling mistakes may be all over.

I request you to completely rectify all these in the best way you think it proper. You have the full authority to make any changes in any part of the write-up in the way you think it best. Even if you do not agree with

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<sup>57</sup>In Appendix, square Brackets i.e. [ . . . ] have been used to insert or replace words to make the sentence clearer to the readers while ensuring that the author's views and their core sense continue to be presented as truly as possible. Similarly, italics have been introduced to emphasise some of the author's significant ideas. – Ed.

some of my views, you may make necessary changes [while] keeping the main theme and its spirit. You may delete or remove any portion or even the whole chapter, if you like. Similarly, you may even add some of your views based on your rural work experience at KISHORE BHARATI in Madhya Pradesh. I am also willing and prepared to present it jointly with your name along with mine to make it more effective. I am not interested in my name or any monetary gain. What I want to convey is that the present approach of Functional Rural Work without simultaneous Structural Changes will not lead to real Socio-economic Transformation in the country. How best to do it is a matter of further dialogue and discussion by all concerned.

Further, at present, there is no Preface and Introduction to the proposed book. So, I want you to do that also. Similarly, I do not know any publisher who would agree to publish such a provocative material. Hence, I would like you to arrange for a good publisher at your end only. Even if it is not brought out in the form of a Book, we can bring it out in the form of a monograph so that the people interested may go through it. You may kindly decide about the Title of the Book also. But, your contribution in terms of the views in general is very important; we may agree or disagree on some points.

In short, I want your full support and all the help from you. Let us make it a joint project, if you agree with my main views. There is no hurry about it. You may take your own time but whenever you do it, please do it with your *heart*. You may take anybody's help, so that it is not much delayed. In my view, you may require about a *fortnight* or so, to prepare a press copy after making necessary corrections and changes (Editor's emphasis).<sup>58</sup> Agricultural rural people have been totally and

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<sup>58</sup> Instead of a fortnight, we took 13 long years to finalise the manuscript for the press! The central cause for the delay was the fundamental issues raised by the author. The book questions the very *raison d'être* of the notion of material development leading to improved economic conditions and prosperity, as advocated in capitalism. It also juxtaposes the goal of social transformation aimed at sensitisation of the human being and building an equitable, socially just and humane society against the prevailing capitalist goal of development. Dr. Anil Sadgopal, who was asked by the author to write the Introduction and who himself has 20 years of grass-roots experience in rural development, *initially* found it beyond his intellectual acumen to engage with the 'paradox of development' posed by the author. Hence, he wrote several drafts of the Introduction over the years and engaged with the author by periodic visits from Bhopal to Mumbai. Ultimately, the author's 'paradox' had to be deconstructed in the ideological perspective of socialism. This called for applying his 'heart' as the author expected of him, not just

deliberately neglected, rather exploited by the Rulers of our country. We must do something to stop them by [bringing about] some basic and fundamental policy changes. I need your help. I shall be highly grateful.

With warm affection,

Yours sincerely,

Suresh Suratwala

**Post-Script.:** I am writing this because I very well know that people like you have great faith in Freedom & Liberty of the Individual, Democratic Institutions and the Educational System presently prevailing in the country. This is a controversial point of disagreement among many of us.

Anil, I am prepared to sit with you and discuss some of the controversial points. The present concepts like Liberty, Individual Freedom, Democracy, Education etc. are prevailing today. These are the tools used by the Capitalist-Imperialist [forces] to retain their political and economic power to exploit the working class and the masses. *In the name of Freedom and Democracy, a small group of minority who had the benefit of educating themselves are ruling and exploiting the people.* The educated middle class, a small group of oligarchy are exploiting in the name of Freedom and Democracy. We are the slaves of this oligarchy, supported by the Governments in USA, UK and Europe through UNO, World Bank, IMF, WTO etc. in the name of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization. Both the ruling party and the parties in the opposition, in Government, Parliament, Assemblies, Planning Commission and all other official bodies of a very small group are together cheating us for their selfish ends. We are quietly observing the [farmers'] killings and suicides. NGOs<sup>59</sup> are also

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mind, and to submerge himself in and 'live' with the manuscript. This he managed to do in May-June 2019. The editing of the manuscript, too, could not remain unaffected from this in-depth ideological engagement with the author's 'paradox'.

- Ed.

<sup>59</sup>For appreciating the political distinction between Voluntary Organisations (VOs) and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), please see Introduction, Footnote 19 to be read with Chapter 7, Footnote 42. Knowing the author's views on social transformation, we have normally used the term 'VOs' unless the political context justifies the use of the term 'NGOs'. In the context here, the author's use of the term 'NGOs' seems justified. - Ed.

not doing anything. Why can't we tell [the farmers] not to repay the loans, instead of committing suicides? Why can't we tell people not to pay any taxes, any revenue fees or charges to the Government?<sup>60</sup>

The Culture, Socio-economic Conditions and even the Geography, History and the Environment of the western countries [in contrast to those of] the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America are quite different [but] we are blindly trying to follow them [i.e. the western countries]. Rather, they are unethically and immorally trying to force on us their way of life by exploiting our ignorance and resources. We must try to find our own way of life. *We have knowingly or unknowingly focused on Freedom and Liberty at the cost of Equality<sup>61</sup>, which is more important for us.* The gap between the rich and poor nations and people within the country has been widening according to all researches and studies. *Development cannot be sustainable without Equality. In the name of Freedom, Liberty and Democracy, a small group of the educated and the well-to-do class has taken over power.* In my view, Nehru, Mahalanobis, Swaminathan M.S., Ahluwalia M., PM, FM and many others are the real culprits to lead us to the present chaos and anarchy in all the fields, including Education. They have ruined our Agriculture and Village & Cottage Industries by promoting capital against labour, in the name of economic reforms. There are no priorities. We have to decide our own priorities. They [i.e. the western capitalist powers] have double standards for different things and different countries. They give subsidies to their rich farmers. When we give [subsidies] to our small farmers, they do not like it. Why should they not? Why do they want to force us in our planning?

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<sup>60</sup>Being primarily inspired by Gandhi's 'Go to the villages' call during the Freedom Struggle, the author's question is reminiscent of Gandhi's non-violent 'Civil Disobedience' or 'Non-Co-operation' movements of the Freedom Struggle. - Ed.

<sup>61</sup>The discerning reader would recall the frequent references in this book to Individual Freedom and Liberty whose proponents the author seems to be implicitly critical of. This must have left many of the readers puzzled and, probably uncomfortable with, too. The riddle stands resolved by this sentence. What the author is clearly critical of are not the values of Individual Freedom and Liberty but of those proponents of these values who do not pursue the value of equality with the same conviction or do not show any concern with the rising inequalities in the society. Notably, the author is entirely comfortable with the Preamble to the Constitution which advocates 'Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship' along with Equality, Social Justice and Fraternity. - Ed.

I tried to phone you on your mobile as well as at Bhopal but could not get you. Hence, I had to take Vasu's<sup>62</sup> help. Accordingly, I am sending you all this material to enable us to present our views, based on grass-roots level experience. In this task I want your help.

Please try to take action at your earliest convenience.

**Note:** Anil, it is absolutely necessary to totally change the Political, Social and Economic Structure and the System of the society before we do anything else. Otherwise we shall continue to do the patch work and the farmers would go on dying and committing suicide

I know this is a very huge task and how to do it is still a larger problem. But let us first make our educated social activists agree and accept this thesis in toto. Otherwise, each one [of us] would waste her/his whole life in making her/his 'shop' look the best. Someone would spend the whole life on big dams, another on Environment, third on Education and so on and so forth.

But the actual urgent need is to totally destroy the existing system, the structure and the *status-quo* which has been consolidated during the last 60 years. Inequality is widening and deepening. The Capitalists-cum-Imperialists and their agencies like the UNO, World Bank, IMF and WTO are fooling us and the Rulers and the Planners are unable to understand the reality. Let us first make them realize this and make concerted effort to destroy it. Real construction would begin in its destruction. We can then begin the creation of a new society on a clean slate. This is most difficult but it is a must. There is no other way. Let us, therefore, make people accept this thesis that the Structure and the System are very crucial and must somehow undergo total change, a total transformation. I know Education is very important but not now, its role is after revolution. First, we must have full empowerment of the masses<sup>63</sup>. I want total change first. And this is the message I wish to convey, you may agree or disagree.

- Suresh/November 14, 2006

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<sup>62</sup>Dr. Vasu Nori, a socially committed and brilliant Structural Engineer in Mumbai, has been a member of KISHORE BHARATI's Executive Committee from early 1980s until last year. - Ed.

<sup>63</sup>Undoubtedly, the empowerment of the masses must receive the highest priority in social action. Yet, the empowerment is itself a process of political education with conscientisation, as Paulo Freire has powerfully advocated. Even the present formal education system, if transformed along the lines proposed by Einstein (See pp. 40-41), can help build the foundation in the schools for mass empowerment. - Ed.

(2)

December 21, 2006

Dear Anil,

I am sure you must have received my long letter and the manuscript of my proposed Book in English on my work at Devapur. But I can understand that due to your other work, activities and preoccupation, you have not been able to respond.

But I wish to request you to spare some time for me and try to read what nonsense I have written and let me first know whether it is worth publishing. I want to have your free, frank and honest view. If yes, I want your help in all the ways in publishing it at your earliest. If not, forget about it and throw it in a dust-bin.

However, I must tell you that the conditions in our country are fast deteriorating. There is chaos and anarchy in all the fields. Unless some bold and radical policy decisions are taken, the things may go out of control. Therefore, it is to alert our people that I have written down some thing. Please speak to me on phone. I tried to reach out to you a number of times but without success. So, please call me at any time. I am at home only but at night, it is better. Hope all of you are in good health. I am pulling on with my frustrations, but physically not so bad.

With affection,

Yours sincerely,

Suresh Suratwala

(3)

June 18, 2008

Dear Anil,

As desired by you, during our telephonic talk on Monday, 9<sup>th</sup> June 2008, I am hurriedly sending you herewith: (1) Biographical and Background Note; (2) Some of the basic questions which are bothering me after working for 35 years in rural areas. Hope you will find this in order.

You are requested to take out more copies of these papers and send them, with the manuscript of the proposed book on the Rural Development Work at Devapur, to your friends and social activists with a request to give their comments both positive as well as negative, freely and frankly, so that you can incorporate them in your larger



work. Prepare yourself mentally to write a detailed Introduction to the same.

But, kindly do give them some dead-line, at least a tentative last date for giving their comments. Otherwise, it will remain pending. Do send me a list of these social activists and their addresses, if you can.

I hope and trust that you will try to take up the job as early as possible, in spite of being busy with so many pre-occupations. Keep well and remember me to Shashi.

Kindly acknowledge, if you can.

Yours sincerely,

(S. R.Suratwala)

Encl: As above

P. S.: i) You may find my questions very simplistic but they are realistic and practical. And I agree that the answers are not easy. ii) The papers have not been properly typed in hurry. You may get them properly retyped, if you like.

(4)

November 01, 2010

Dear Hardenia ji,

Thank you for sending me the edited draft of the complete text of the manuscript of the book on Devapur Project. The corrections and editing has been done very well. It is now readable and makes sense. You have done an excellent job. I am sure you must have taken great pains and put in a lot of hard work. I am highly grateful to you for your valuable help. I have found everything in order except some typographical errors, which may please be corrected at the time of proof-reading. You must be having its hard copy so I am not sending you back the copy you have sent to me.

shall now try to respond to the various points raised by you in your letter, one by one, as follows:-

1. Suitable, appropriate and attractive Title for the book may please be decided by you and Anil. It should bring out the spirit of the book.
2. Preface for the book written by me is sent herewith. You are requested to make necessary and corrections and changes. I would like “A summary of conclusions” in the beginning, after the

Preface, if you and Anil are agreeable. I am sending you a Draft for your perusal and corrections. All the readers may not like to read the whole book but would like to know the gist of the book.

3. I hope Anil gets some time to write a really long and good Introduction to the book. I would like him to write a very forceful Introduction, as early as possible.
4. Comments and a Special Note. There is no other person better than you to write a Special Note. You should give the benefit of your knowledge and experience of rural work to the book.
5. A Map of Maan Taluka and a map of villages also sent herewith, as required.
6. Comparative Statistical Tables in English are also sent herewith. Hope you will find them in order. I suggest you try to reduce their size in print, so that the space and pages are not wasted.
7. Some photographs of Devapur Project are also sent but they are very old. You may select the best you like. Notes on the photographs are written on the back side. 21 photographs.
8. As regards Abbreviations, if you could send me the list, I can give you the full form.
9. You may include any of my relevant written papers in the Appendix, if you think proper.

I do not think that Sir Dorabaji Tata Trust would agree to print and publish the book. I would like it to be published by KISHORE BHARATI (KB), if KB's Executive Committee agrees. I could contribute a modest amount towards its expenses, if KB wants. I am not interested in any income for me. All the Rights should go to KB. I shall also reimburse all the expenditure you have incurred so far and you may incur in future also. Both Anil and you will have to do everything till the book is finally published. I need your help.

Thanking you,

With warm regards,

Yours Sincerely,

Suresh Suratwala

Copy to Anil Sadgopal

August 07, 2013

Dear Hardenia ji

I am sending you my hand-written explanatory note on my views for you and Anil. Please get it typed and send a copy to Anil and to me. Kindly let me have your comments and ask Anil also to give his comments. You may include any portion of this note in your editorial comments, if you like. When completed send your editorial comments to me and Anil. Tell Anil to finish his revised Introduction as soon as possible. I hope that both of you and Anil will try to publish the book as early as possible. If you have any questions, do phone me.

Thanking you, with regards,

Yours Sincerely,

Suresh Suratwala

***Attached Note:***

**For Anil & Rajendra Hardenia**

I would like Jyotibhai Desai<sup>64</sup> and all who have worked in the villages to come out with their own experiences and express their views on what are the real problems of the rural people and the possible real solutions, instead of making comments on what I have written. Somebody should compile all such views and experiences and present them in a consolidated form so that it could have impact on our Planners, Policy makers and Rulers. To the best of my knowledge, many of our rural workers have undergone similar experiences but, for some reason or compulsion, they are reluctant to come out with the lessons they learnt. One of the main compulsions is Self-Security and/or Dogmatism. Most of them feel that “I have done my duty and do not wish to go into deeper or wider implications of what I have done”. There is also a sense of Self-Satisfaction and lack of desire to face the Truth and Reality with an open mind and reason. One must certainly have an ideology but blind faith and belief do not help the society. There must be logic and reasoning in what you say or do.

---

<sup>64</sup>An indomitable Gandhian educationist, age 93 years, who struggled to transcend Gandhi in pursuit of emancipative education. He and the author together participated in the 1942 Quit India movement. Along with the author, he joined KISHORE BHARATI's Executive Committee in 1970 and continued till 2000s.

In substance, my only submission is that *no Development or Education is possible in a society rooted in inequalities of various kinds. Equality must have a priority in our agenda and override all other actions, including those pertaining to Development and Education.* Dogmatic pursuit of any ideology – be it Gandhism, Socialism or Marxism - will lead us nowhere. There is a difference between dogmatism and commitment. My commitment is to certain values – and Equality is a basic and fundamental pre-condition – essential value for any Development including Education. *No amount of Education or Development in an unequal society will take us to our goal. On the contrary, it leads to greater inequality.* Even Right to Education in an unequal society has resulted in the creation of selfish middle class which has divided the society further. In an unequal society, anyone who gets an opportunity to accumulate wealth or power, exploits others. Education is also a type of power that makes exploitation possible. Thus, instead of moving towards a classless society, we move towards a more divided and unequal society. *The greatest blunder that the political leadership of our country has made since independence is to neglect the agenda of promoting and strengthening equality in society. In post-independence India, an outstanding exception was Dr. Ambedkar who fought for building a society liberated from class, caste and patriarchy and enshrined the principle of equality with social justice in the Constitution (see Epilogue for his views on inequality in the Constituent Assembly on 25th November 1949, p. 166).*

I have tried to analyze the so-called 'Gandhian' approach to Rural Development. When those claiming to be 'Gandhians' go to the villages, they start by establishing an institution – an *Ashram* or a school. For this, they have to obtain some land which is generally the best in the village. They fence that land and construct some building, may be a simple one. They start their activities with their own self-satisfying programs, like the morning prayer, followed by some walk or physical work within the compound and then their special breakfast. They start their preaching of good values in life and activities like spinning. This process alienates them from the village life. They create an island of their own. They tend not to integrate with the people's life. This turns them into vested interest of some kind. Thus, they totally miss the opportunity to learn from the people. In my view, this approach itself has resulted in failure to influence the people and organise them for some common cause. Gujarat is probably the best

example of this phenomenon. The highest number of the Gandhian *Ashrams* in the country were probably established in Gujarat. . . they could not make any real impact on the people. Nor could they play any decisive role in preventing the growth of communalism in the post-Godhra Gujarat. Apparently, [they] just got dogmatically trapped in their ideology and could not learn from the people's experience.

The NGOs – the professional 'Gandhians' as well as the various kinds of Development-oriented welfarists, like the Missions - have done good work in their own fields in their own way. I appreciate it and I have no quarrel with it. I have also done something similar but with an open mind, thereby learning from my experience and changing my old views. However, what I expect from all of the Voluntary Organisations is their views on the socio-economic transformation, based on their experience. Most of them tend not to engage with such reflection. They get stuck-up with setting their own 'shop'. They must present their views sincerely and honestly so that the country could benefit. Each one may be doing excellent work in her/his specialised field but this will not help us to bring about any progressive social and economic transformation. The roots of our society are grounded in a traditionally feudal, and at the same time, capitalist framework. This mindset cannot be changed by superfluous patch-work. Each one of us should try to find out why [what] we did in our own field in our own way could not bring about basic and fundamental total change and transformation in the society, in spite of sincere hard work by many good intellectuals and people. We must try to seek answers to why we could not achieve our ultimate goal and what could be done to remedy it? We must truthfully accept our failures and find out what is the real way, real path we should follow from now onwards. This is expected from all good intentioned rural workers you, me and Jyotibhai (See Appendix, Footnote 64 on Jyotibhai). All of us have some vision or some dream. We try to act according to our conscious mind, our background, training and education during our youthful years. We succeed in some and we fail in others. But our mind matures with experience. But physically we become old . . . But the real problem is our mind and intellect. We should not get old and stuck-up intellectually. And we should leave the essence our life/work experiences for the future generations - honestly and sincerely. Let them continue to work on the basis of our experiences. That is what I am trying to do. This is my humble submission to all my friends.



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